

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

Appellants : Richard E. McNutt et al.
Application No. : 09/827,657 Confirmation No. : 5396
Filed : April 5, 2001
For : SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR RECOGNIZING
PREFERRED WAGERERS
Art Unit : 3714
Examiner : Robert E. Pezzuto

New York, New York 10036
March 4, 2008

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P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

APPEAL BRIEF UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 41.37

Sir:

Appellants are filing this Appeal Brief in support of the August 6, 2007 Notice of Appeal from the rejection of claims 1, 5, 11, 15, 19, and 25 in the final Office Action dated March 5, 2007.

Appellants hereby petition for a five-month extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) for filing this Appeal Brief. With the extension of time, this Appeal Brief is due on or before March 6, 2008. The Director is hereby authorized to charge \$2230.00 to Deposit Account No. 06-1075 (Order No. 003043-0035) in payment of the extension of time fee required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(a)(4).

The Director is hereby authorized to charge \$510.00 to Deposit Account No. 06-1075 (Order No. 003043-

0035) in payment of the filing fee required under 37 C.F.R. § 41.20(b)(2). The Director is also hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be due in connection with this Appeal Brief, or credit any overpayment of the same, to Deposit Account No. 06-1075 (Order No. 003043-0035).

In view of the arguments and authorities set forth below, the Board should find the rejection of claims 1, 5, 11, 15, 19, and 25 to be in error, and the Board should reverse the rejection.

This Brief has the following appendices:

Claims Appendix

Appendix A: Copy of the claims involved in this appeal;

Evidence Appendices

Appendix B: Copy of the final Office Action dated May March 5, 2007;

Appendix C: Copy Stronach U.S. Patent No. 6,722,980 (hereinafter "Stronach"); and

Appendix D: Copy of Acres et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,364,768 (hereinafter "Acres").

Related Proceedings Appendix

None.

(i) Real Party in Interest

Appellants respectfully advise the Board that the real party in interest in the above-identified patent application is ODS Properties, Inc., a corporation

organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, and having an office and place of business at 6701 Center Drive West, Los Angeles, CA 90045, which is the assignee of this application.

(ii) Related Appeals and Interferences

Appellants respectfully advise the Board that there are no other appeals or interferences known to appellants, their legal representative, or their assignee that will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

(iii) Status of Claims

Claims 1, 5, 11, 15, 19, and 25 are finally rejected in this application and are on appeal. Claims 2-4, 6-10, 12-14, 16-18, 20-24, and 26 28 are withdrawn from consideration as being directed to a non-elected species.

(iv) Status of Amendments

There have been no amendments filed subsequent to the March 5, 2007 final Office Action.

(v) Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

Appellants' independent claim 1 is directed toward a method for recognizing a wagerer of an interactive wagering application implemented at least partially on user equipment (see, e.g., appellants' specification, FIG. 1; page 1, lines 9-13; and page 4, line 16 through page 5, line 2). Racing data is received at the user equipment from a racing data provider, wherein at least a portion of the data originates from at least one race track where

races corresponding to the received racing data are being run (*see, e.g.,* appellants' specification, FIG. 1; and page 8, line 23 through page 9, lines 8). A wagerer is allowed to place a parimutuel wager on one of the races at the user equipment (*see, e.g.,* appellants' specification, page 5, lines 3-7). It is determined if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria, wherein each criterion of the plurality of criteria is associated with a different incentive (*see, e.g.,* appellants' specification, FIG. 2, step 206; FIG. 3, page 9, line 25 through page 10, line 8; and page 11, line 19 through page 13, line 19). When the wagerer is determined to be recognized based on the one criterion, the incentive associated with the one criterion is provided to the wager (*see, e.g.,* appellants' specification, FIG. 2, step 210; FIG. 3; and page 10, line 27 through page 13, line 19).

Appellants' independent claim 15 is directed toward a system that recognizes a wager (*see, e.g.,* appellants' specification, page 1, lines 9-13). User equipment is configured to receive racing data from a racing data provider, wherein at least a portion of the data originates from at least one race track where races corresponding to the received racing data are being run (*see, e.g.,* appellants' specification, FIG. 1; and page 8, line 23 through page 9, lines 8). The user equipment is also configured to allow a wagerer to place a parimutuel wager on one of the races (*see, e.g.,* appellants' specification, page 5, lines 3-7). A wagering control system is configured to determine if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria, wherein each criterion of the plurality of

criteria is associated with a different incentive (see, e.g., appellants' specification, FIG. 1, elements 112, 114, 116, and 118; FIG. 2, step 206; FIG. 3; page 9, line 25 through page 10, line 8; and page 11, line 19 through page 13, line 19). The wagering control system is also configured to provide the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer, when the wagerer is determined to be recognized based on the one criterion (see, e.g., appellants' specification, FIG. 2, step 210; FIG. 3; and page 10, line 27 through page 13, line 19).

(vi) Ground of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal

The ground of rejection to be reviewed on this appeal is the final rejection of claims 1, 11, 15, and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Stronach and claims 5 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Stronach in view of Acres.

(vii) Argument

The initial burden of establishing a prima facie basis to deny patentability to a claimed invention is always upon the Examiner. In re Oetiker, 977 F.2d 1443, 24 USPQ2d 1443 (Fed. Cir. 1992). For a proper rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102, each and every element as set forth in the claim must be found in a single prior art reference. Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California, 814 F.2d 628, 2 USPQ2d 1051 (Fed. Cir. 1987). A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference. MPEP 2131.

The Examiner contends in the March 5, 2007 final Office Action (hereinafter "Office Action") that Stronach

shows all of the elements of appellants' independent claims 1 and 15. In particular, the Examiner contends that Stronach shows "determining if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria, wherein each criterion of the plurality of criteria is associated with a different incentive," and "when the wagerer is determined to be recognized based on the one criterion, providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer," as specified by appellants' independent claims 1 and 15.

In support for this contention, the Examiner asserts that these features of appellants' claims are "inherent [in] the prize selection algorithm of Stronach wherein the prize is selected according to every certain amount of wager submissions." Office Action, page 3, lines 8-10. The alleged support for this assertions is provided at column 10, line 66 through column 11, line 14, which states:

The wagering processor may also be configured to provide a prize to a user upon the submission of a wager. For example, the submission of a wager may trigger, according to a prize selection algorithm, the provision of a prize to the user, for example, in the form of a credit of the user's account or a credit or other type of prize on a ticket provided from the ticket dispensing device. In an embodiment, the prize selection algorithm may simply be a random seed or else the prize selection algorithm may determine to provide a prize after every certain amount of wager submissions through the wagering terminal. In another embodiment, where the prize selection algorithm is implemented across the wagering system, the prize selection may determine to provide a prize to a particular wagering terminal after every certain amount of wager submissions through wagering terminals throughout the wagering system.

As previously set forth in Appellants' Reply to Office Action, filed on August 7, 2006, this passage of Stronach refers to a "prize selection algorithm". The prize selection algorithm may trigger the provision of a prize to a user either randomly or based on the cumulative amount of wager submissions received from one or many wagering terminals. The prizes may include, for example, a credit to the users wagering account or other types of prizes. However, Stronach does not show that there is any association between the reasons that a prize is provided (i.e., the criterion) and the types of prizes that are provided (i.e., the incentive). Therefore, Appellants' argued that Stronach does not expressly or inherently show all of the feature of appellants' independent claims 1 and 15.

In the Office Action, the Examiner responded to appellants' argument by maintaining that the prize selection algorithm of Stronach inherently shows all of the elements of appellants' amended claims. The Examiner asserts that the prize selection algorithm of Stronach inherently provides prizes based on wager amounts using pay tables. In particular, the Examiner states:

This [prize selection] algorithm [of Stronach] as was noted in the previous action is used to determine a prize according to the particular amount of a wager submission. These can be random or associated with a pay table. A pay table is well known in the art to correlate combinations of outcomes and wagers. A player is recognized on the criterion of a wagered amount and provided an incentive based on the credits awarded or other prizes. While Stronach does not specifically indicate a pay table is associating outcomes and wagers, it is inherent based on the definition of a pay table. That is to say a correlation between wager and incentive is necessarily present in the concept of a pay table. Thus, it is deemed to be

inherent that a pay table correlates a wager with an incentive.

Office Action, page 5, lines 1-12.

In this passage, the Examiner mischaracterizes Stronach by asserting that Stronach inherently shows that prize amounts for the prize selection algorithm are determined based on wager amount. In particular, the Examiner states that the prize selection algorithm determines a prize "according to an amount of a wager submission." In fact, the relevant portion of Stronach states, "the prize selection algorithm may simply be a random seed or else the prize selection algorithm may determine to provide a prize after every certain amount of wager submissions through the wagering terminal." Stronach, column 11, lines 5-9 (emphasis added). Thus, there is no support for the Examiner's assertion that the prize selection algorithm of Stronach is based on wager amounts. Rather, as described above, this portion of Stronach merely refers triggers for providing prizes and does not refer to determining prize amounts or types.

The Examiner also asserts in the above passage that Stronach inherently shows using pay tables to determine prize amounts for the prize selection algorithm. Pay tables (e.g., FIG. 8 of Stronach) provide actual or potential payout information for a given wager. Namely, if a particular wager is successful, the wagerer will be paid the amount listed in the table associated with that wager. The Examiner contends that Stronach inherently discloses using payout tables in the same manner for the prize selection algorithm. In support of this contention, the Examiner cites a portion of Stronach that states "payout tables may be provided for wager types other than the win wager type," implying that the prize selection algorithm is

another wager type. Stronach, column 17, lines 3-4. However, it is clear from the background portion of Stronach that various wager types are used in parimutuel wagering (e.g., win, place, show, exacta, triacta, etc.). See Stronach, column 1, lines 43-44. Thus, when Stronach refers to payout tables for wager types other than the win wager type, Stronach is referring to payout tables for the place wager type, the show wager type, the exacta wager type, the triacta wager type, etc. In sharp contrast to the various wager types that rely on payout tables, Stronach describes a flexible approach for distributing prizes in a random or semi-random fashion -- namely, the prize selection algorithm. Therefore there is no basis for the Examiner's assertion that pay tables are either expressly or inherently used in connection with the prize selection algorithm of Stronach.

Furthermore, according to MPEP 2112 (IV), "[i]n relying upon the theory of inherency, the examiner must provide a basis in fact and/or technical reasoning to reasonably support the determination that the allegedly inherent characteristic necessarily flows from the teachings of the applied prior art." (emphasis in original). A claim limitation is inherent in the prior art if it is necessarily present in the prior art, not merely probably or possibly present. Akamai Technologies, Inc. v. Cable & Wireless Internet Services, Inc., 344 F.3d 1186, 68 USPQ2d 1186 (Fed. Cir. 2003) (emphasis added). Even assuming arguendo that it is possible that a payout table may be used in connection with the prize selection algorithm of Stronach, the Examiner has failed to provide any evidence that this algorithm of Stronach necessarily includes a payout table.

Finally, even if the prize selection algorithm of Stronach does determine to recognize a wagerer based on a wager amount (which appellants maintain Stronach does not describe) and further that an amount of the prize is selected based on this amount using a payment table (which appellant also maintain Stronach does not describe), this is only a one criterion (i.e., wager amount) and one incentive (i.e., the prize). Thus even if the Examiner's interpretation of Stronach were correct (which appellants maintain it is not), Stronach still does not show a plurality of criteria each associated with a different incentive as specified by appellants' claims.

For at least the above reasons, Stronach does not explicitly or implicitly show (a) that each criterion of a plurality of criteria is associated with a different incentive and (b) when a wagerer is determined to be recognized based on a criterion, an incentive is provided to the wagerer that is associated with that criterion, as specified by appellants' amended independent claims 1 and 15.

Accordingly, because Stronach fails to show or suggest every limitation of appellants' independent claims 1 and 15, as is required for a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), their rejection is improper. Reversal of the rejection of claims 1 and 15 is therefore respectfully

requested. Claims 5, 11, 19, and 25 depend from independent claims 1 and 15, respectively. Therefore, for at least this reason, reversal of the rejection of claims 5, 11, 19, and 25 is also respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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(viii) Claims Appendix

CLAIMS APPENDIX A
CLAIMS ON APPEAL

1. (Previously Presented) A method for recognizing a wagerer of an interactive wagering application implemented at least partially on user equipment, comprising:

receiving racing data at the user equipment from a racing data provider, wherein at least a portion of the racing data originates from at least one race track where races corresponding to the received racing data are being run;

allowing a wagerer at the user equipment to place a parimutuel wager on one of the races;

determining if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria, wherein each criterion of the plurality of criteria is associated with a different incentive; and

when the wagerer is determined to be recognized based on the one criterion, providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer.

2. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion comprises determining if the wagerer just opened a wagering account.

3. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion comprises determining if the wagerer just placed a first wager.

4. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion comprises determining if the wagerer just placed a target amount wager.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion comprises determining if the wagerer is a VIP.

6. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion comprises determining if the wagerer subscribed to an event.

7. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion comprises determining if the wagerer tuned to an event.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer comprises greeting the wagerer on television.

9. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer comprises greeting the wagerer on a telephone.

10. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer comprises providing a free wager.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer comprises providing a discount on wagering service.

12. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer comprises providing free travel to the wagerer.

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer comprises providing frequent flier miles to the wagerer.

14. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein providing the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer comprises providing special treatment to the wagerer at a wagering event location.

15. (Previously Presented) An interactive wagering system that recognizes a wagerer, comprising:

user equipment configured to:

receive racing data from a racing data provider, wherein at least a portion of the racing data originates from at least one race track where races corresponding to the racing data are being run, and

allow a wagerer to place a wager on one of the races; and

a wagering control system configured to:

determine if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria, wherein each criterion of the plurality of criteria is associated with a different incentive, and

when the wagerer is determined to be recognized based on the one criterion, provide the incentive associated with the one criterion to the wagerer.

16. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion, determines if the wagerer just opened a wagering account.

17. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion, determines if the wagerer just placed a first wager.

18. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion, determines if the wagerer just placed a target amount wager.

19. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion, determines if the wagerer is a VIP.

20. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion, determines if the wagerer subscribed to an event.

21. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in determining whether the wagerer is to be recognized based on the one criterion, determines if the wagerer tuned to an event.

22. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in providing the incentive to the wagerer associated with the one criterion, greets the wagerer on television.

23. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in providing the incentive to the wagerer associated with the one criterion, greets the wagerer on a telephone.

24. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in providing the incentive to the wagerer associated with the one criterion, provides a free wager.

25. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in providing the incentive to the wagerer associated with the one criterion, provides a discount on wagering service.

26. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in providing the incentive to

the wagerer associated with the one criterion, provides free travel to the wagerer.

27. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in providing the incentive to the wagerer associated with the one criterion, provides frequent flier miles to the wagerer.

28. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 15, wherein the wagering control system, in providing the incentive to the wagerer associated with the one criterion, provides special treatment to the wagerer at a wagering event location.

(ix) Evidence Appendix

EVIDENCE APPENDIX B
COPY OF THE FINAL OFFICE ACTION DATED MARCH 5, 2007



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/827,657	04/05/2001	Richard E. McNutt	ODS/035	5396
1473	7590	03/05/2007	EXAMINER	
FISH & NEAVE IP GROUP			BANTA, TRAVIS R.	
ROPES & GRAY LLP			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
1211 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS				
NEW YORK, NY 10036-8704			3714	

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS	03/05/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/827,657

Applicant(s)

MCNUTT ET AL.

Examiner

Travis R. Banta

Art Unit

3714

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(b). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 13 November 2006.
 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-28 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) 2-4,6-10,12-14,16-18,20-24 and 26-28 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 1,5,11,15,19 and 25 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date 11/13/2006.
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____.
 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application
 6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

The Amendment filed August 7, 2006 has been received. Note that, claims 2-4, 6-10, 12-14, 16-18, 20-24, and 26-28 have been previously withdrawn due to non-elected species; and claims 1, 5, 11, 15, 19, and 25 have been examined on the merits. Currently, claims 1-28 are pending in the application. Acknowledgment has been made.

Information Disclosure Statement

The information disclosure statement (IDS) submitted on 11/13/2006 was considered by the examiner. An initialed copy is enclosed.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1, 11, 15, and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Stronach (6,722,980).

Referring to claims 1 and 15, Stronach teaches a method and system for recognizing a wagerer (game player) of an interactive wagering application implemented at least partially on user equipment comprising: user equipment (wagering terminal 120, Figs.2-4; 3:54-4:57, 13:66-14:19) configured for receiving racing data from a racing data provider (110, Fig.1), wherein at least a portion of the racing data

originates from at least one race track where races corresponding to the racing data are being run (3:30-51; 8:23-50); allowing a wagerer to place a parimutuel wager on one of the races (4:43-57); a wagering control system configured for selecting a wagerer, and determining if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria, wherein each criterion of the plurality of criteria is associated with a different incentive; and when the wagerer is determined to be recognized based on the one criterion, providing an incentive to the wagerer (game player) (10:66-11:14). Note that, the claimed different incentive related to each criterion are inherent the prize selection algorithm of Stronach wherein the prize is selected according to every certain amount of wager submissions, and further, payout tables maybe provided for the wager type other than the win wager type (11:5-14; 17:1-4).

Referring to claims 11 and 25, Stronach teaches providing the incentive to the wagerer comprises providing a discount on wagering service, i.e., credit is a discount (10:66-11:5).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 5 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stronach in view of Acres et al. (6,364,768).

Stronach teaches all limitations of claims 1,11,15, and 25 above. Stronach does not explicitly teach the limitation of determining if the to be recognized wagerer is a VIP (claims 5 and 19).

Acres et al., however, teaches a method and system for recognizing a wagerer (game player) of an interactive wagering application comprising: determining if the to be recognized wagerer is a VIP (8:35-61).

It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to provide the player tracking system of Acres et al. to the interactive racing system and method of Stronach to provide a friendly interactive gambling environment to encourage frequent players to come back as well as attract new players thus increase profit.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 8/7/2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The Applicant has essentially contended several different points.

1. The Examiner has not proven inherency with respect to Stronarch showing the applicant's claimed feature of "determining if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria and providing the incentive associated with that one criterion to the wagerer."

2. The Examiner has "mischaracterized the prize selection algorithm of Stronarch and that "the Examiner's implicit contention that there are payout tables associated with the prize selection algorithm is similarly without merit".

Art Unit: 3714

With respect to item 1, Stronarch teaches a prize selection algorithm. This algorithm as was noted in the previous action is used to determine a prize according to the particular amount of a wager submission. These can be random or associated with a pay table. A pay table is well known in the art to correlate combinations of outcomes and wagers (See column 11 lines 6-14). A player is recognized on the criterion of a wagered amount and provided an incentive based on the credits awarded or other prizes (see column 10 line 66 through column 11 line 5). While Stronarch does not specifically indicate a pay table is associating outcomes and wagers, it is inherent based on the definition of a pay table. That is to say a correlation between wager and incentive is necessarily present in the concept of a pay table. See Continental Can Co. USA v. Monsanto Co. Thus, it is deemed to be inherent that a pay table correlates a wager with an incentive. Please see also the included definition of "pay table" from <http://www.slotmachinesabc.com/terminology/termsip.html>. The rejection is respectfully maintained.

Secondly, the applicant has argued that the payout tables are not associated with the prize selection. Specifically the applicant states that "when Stronarch refers to payout tables for wager types other than the win wager type, Stronarch is referring to payout tables for the place wager type, the show wager type, the exacta wager type, the triacta wager type, etc." The examiner feels this is without consequence as pay tables are a prize selection algorithm especially as described by Stronarch column 16 line 44 through line 15 line 4. Even if Stronarch intends to reference pay tables for the place wager type, the show wager type, the exacta wager type, the triacta wager type, etc,

these are also prize selection algorithms. Therefore, a pay table must be associated with a prize selection algorithm because they are indeed the same.

The applicant states that wager payouts are not prizes and therefore, a pay table and a prize selection algorithm can not be the same. However, on page 4 of the Remarks, the quoted Stronarch column 10 lines 66 through column 11 line 5 for support saying "The prizes may include, for example, a credit to the users wagering account or other types of prizes". As the Applicant has cited this reference for support, the Examiner takes this to mean the Applicant admits that a prize and a payout are the same contrary to the assertion that payouts are not prizes on page 5 of the remarks.

In summary, Stronarch does teach that 1) determining if the wagerer is to be recognized based on one criterion of a plurality of criteria and providing the incentive associated with that one criterion to the wagerer and 2) that there are payout tables associated with the prize selection algorithm.

Stronarch does teach every limitation of the Applicants independent claims and the rejections are respectfully maintained.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the

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shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Travis R. Banta whose telephone number is (571) 272-1615. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 9-4.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Bob Pezzuto can be reached on (571) 272-6996. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

TB

Ronald Janson
Primary Examiner

3/2/07

EVIDENCE APPENDIX C
COPY OF STRONACH U.S. PATENT NO. 6,722,980



US006722980B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Stronach

(10) Patent No.: US 6,722,980 B2
(15) Date of Patent: *Apr. 20, 2004

(54) WAGERING SYSTEM

(76) Inventor: Andrew M. Stronach, 14875 Bayview Avenue, Aurora, Ontario (CA), L3G 4G8

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: 09/997,288

(22) Filed: Nov. 30, 2001

(65) Prior Publication Data

US 2002/0142816 A1 Oct. 3, 2002

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. PCT/CA00/00443, filed on May 1, 2000.

(60) Provisional application No. 60/131,806, filed on Apr. 30, 1999.

(51) Int. Cl? A63F 9/22

(52) U.S. Cl. 463/25; 463/40; 463/42;

463/28

(58) Field of Search 463/25, 28, 40, 463/42

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* cited by examiner

Primary Examiner—Michael O'Neill

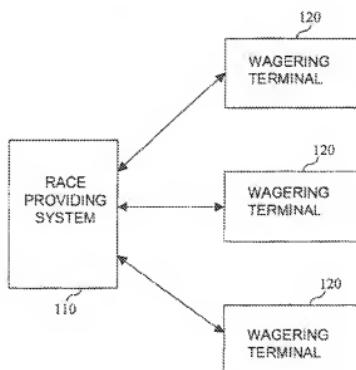
Assistant Examiner—Corbett B. Coburn

(74) Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Mark A. Litman & Associates, P.A.

(57) ABSTRACT

A wagering system comprises a race providing system facilitating wagering on race events and providing information regarding the race events, and at least one wagering terminal in communication with the race providing system. The at least one wagering terminal includes a race event selector to select next race events for wagering, a display to present information regarding the selected race events, a user interface to place a wager on an elected race event of the selected race events displayed, and a wagering value mechanism to provide a wager amount for the wager on the elected race event. Further, at least one of the race providing system and the at least one wagering terminal includes a quick pick race contestant(s) selector receiving handicapping information and odds information from the race providing system to select one or more race contestants of an elected race event for the wager in accordance with the received handicapping information and odds information.

45 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets



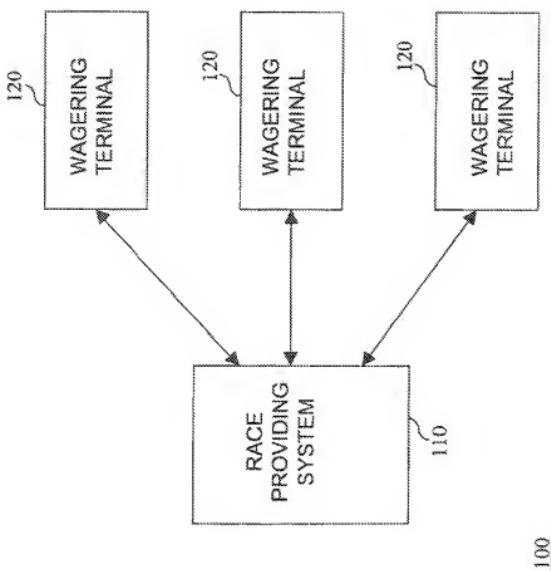


FIG. 1

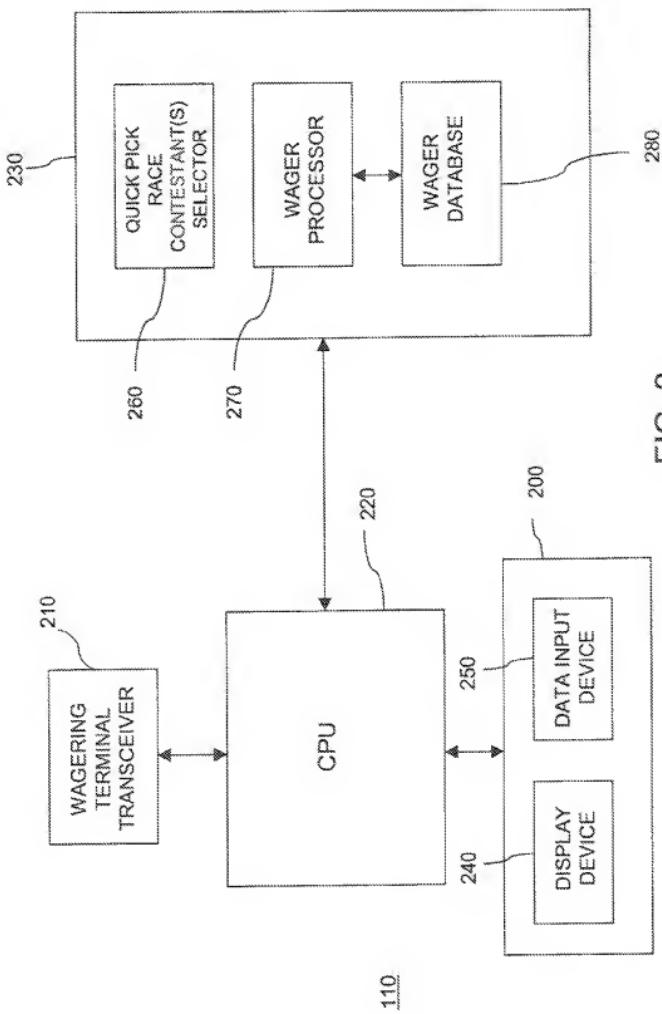


FIG. 2

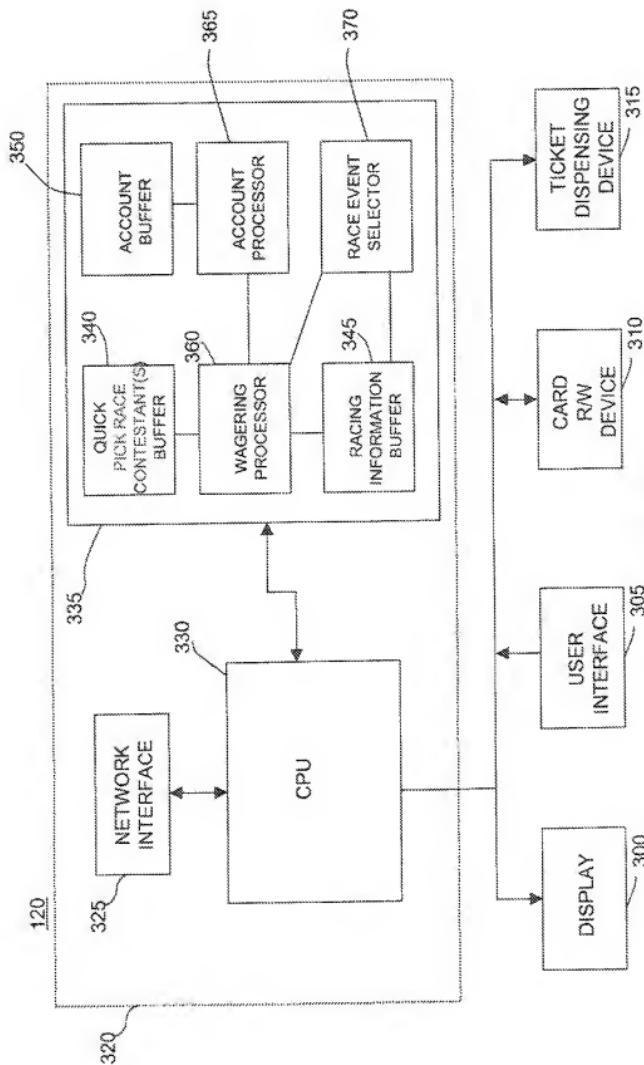


FIG. 3

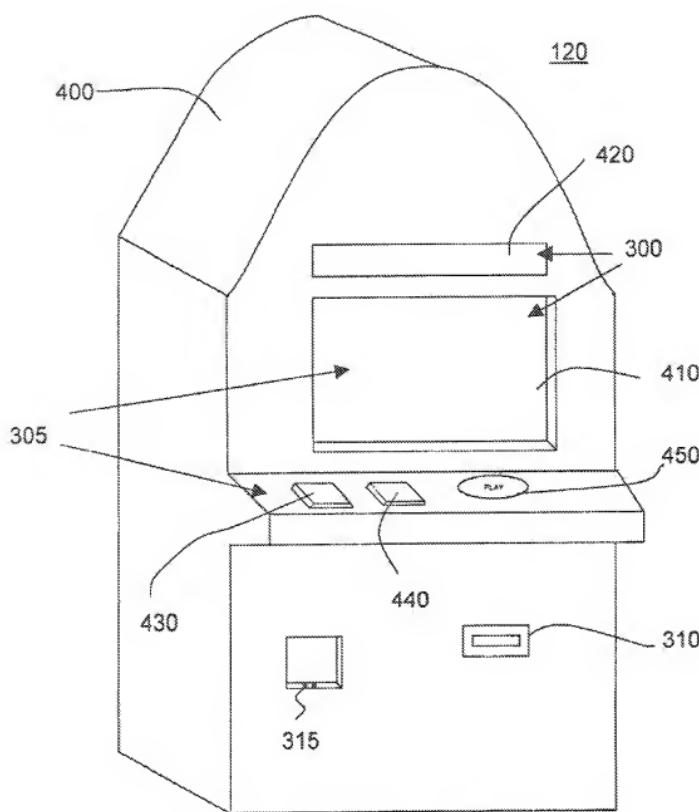


FIG. 4

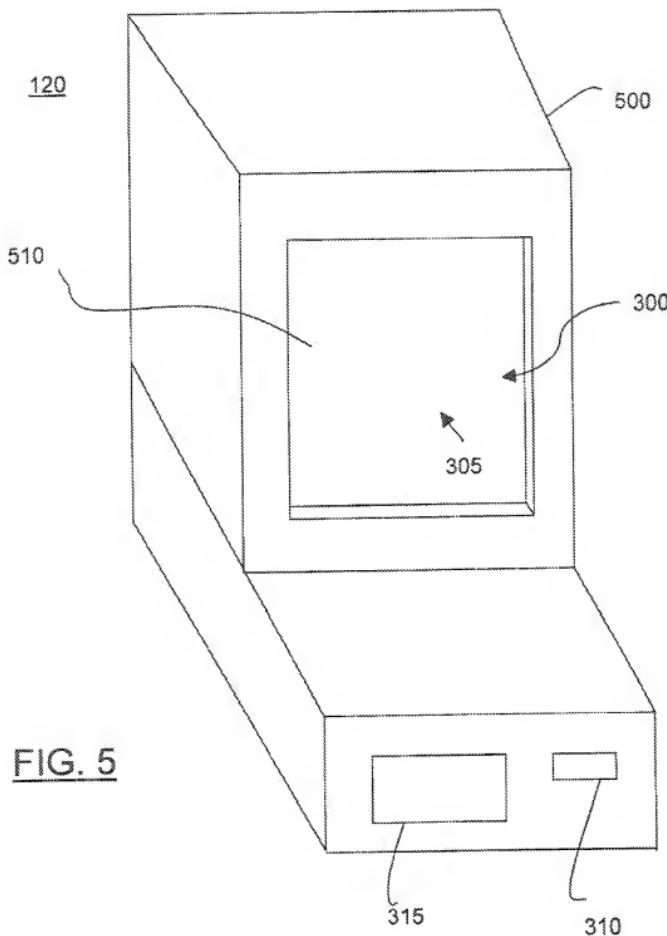


FIG. 5

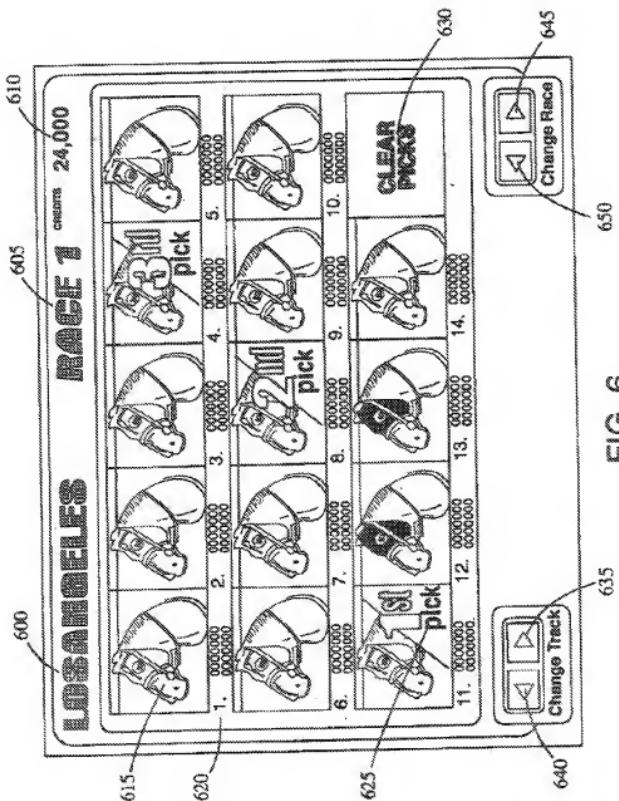


FIG. 6

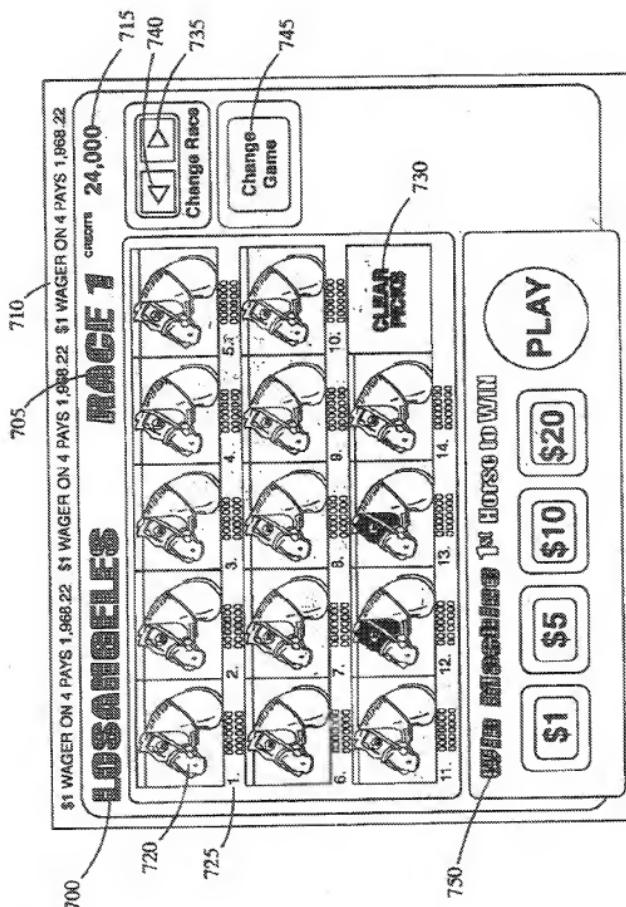


FIG. 7

8

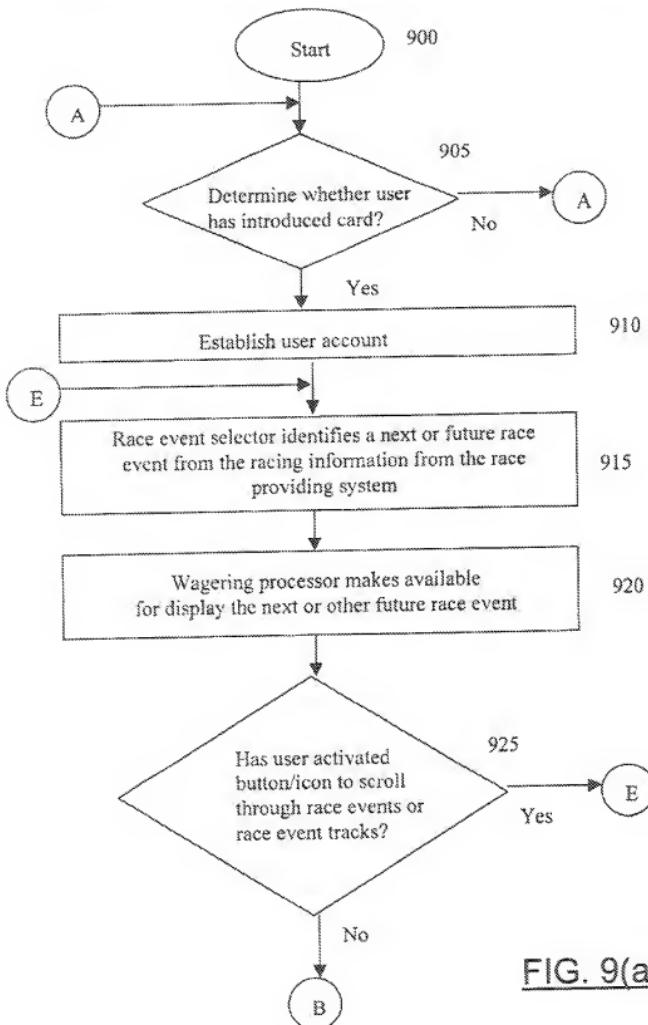


FIG. 9(a)

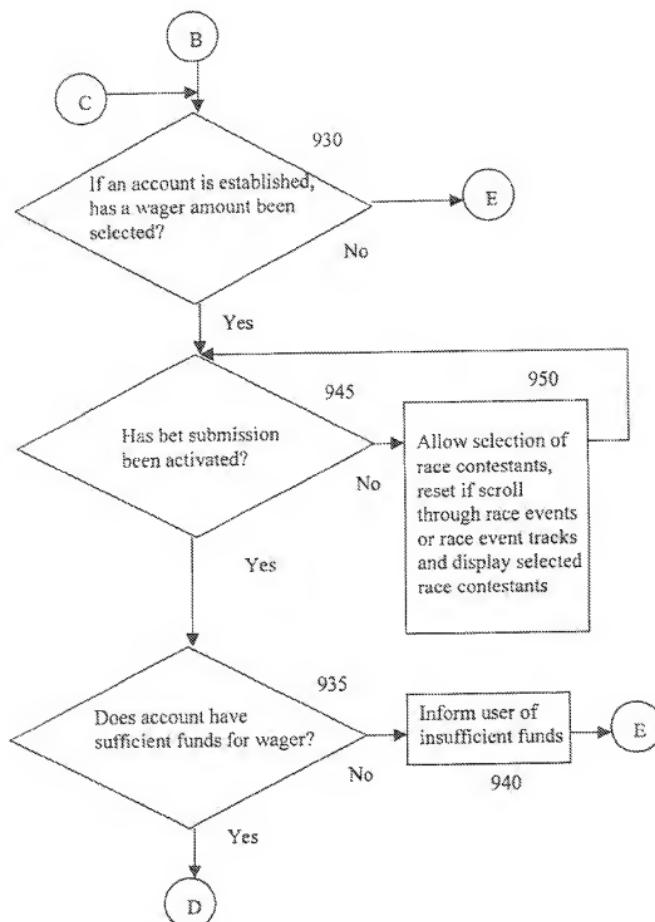


FIG. 9(b)

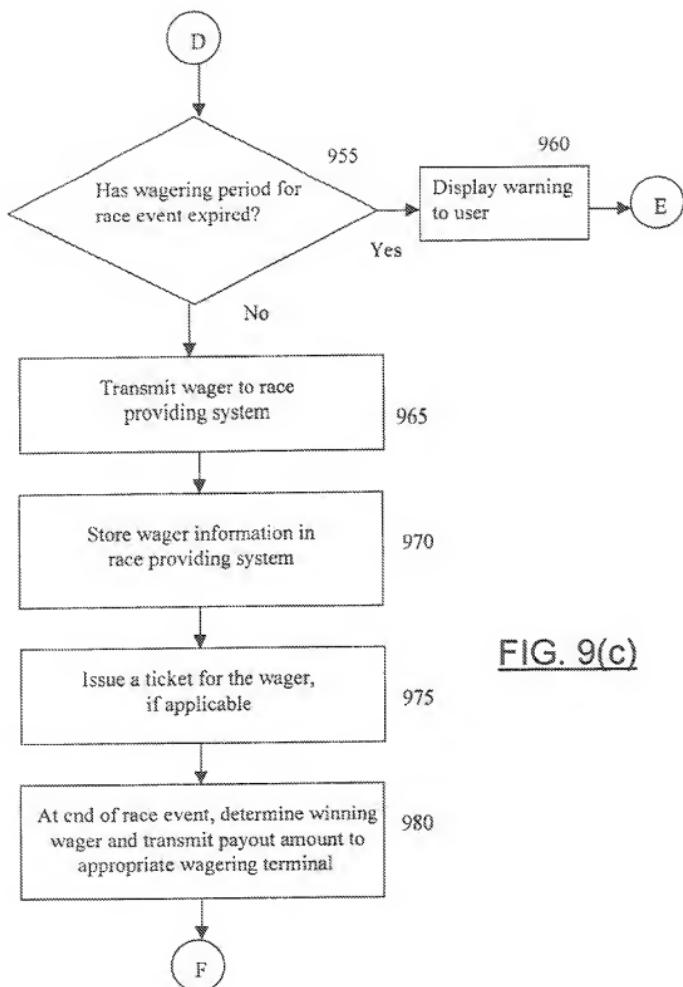


FIG. 9(c)

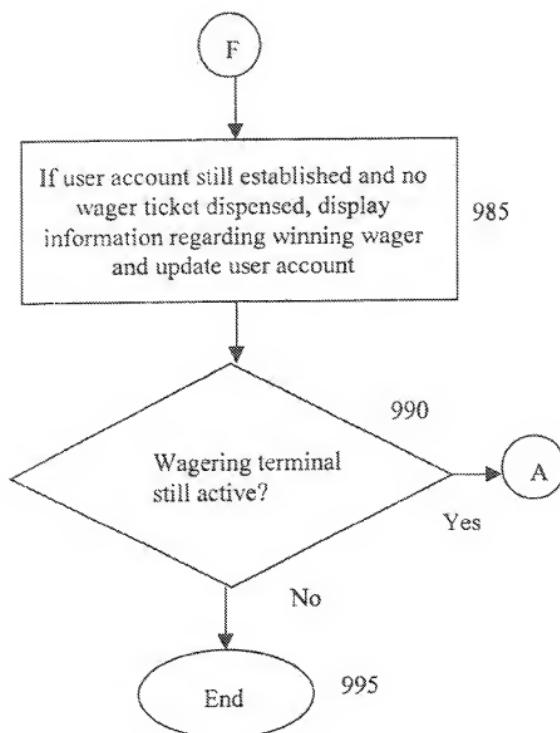


FIG. 9(d)

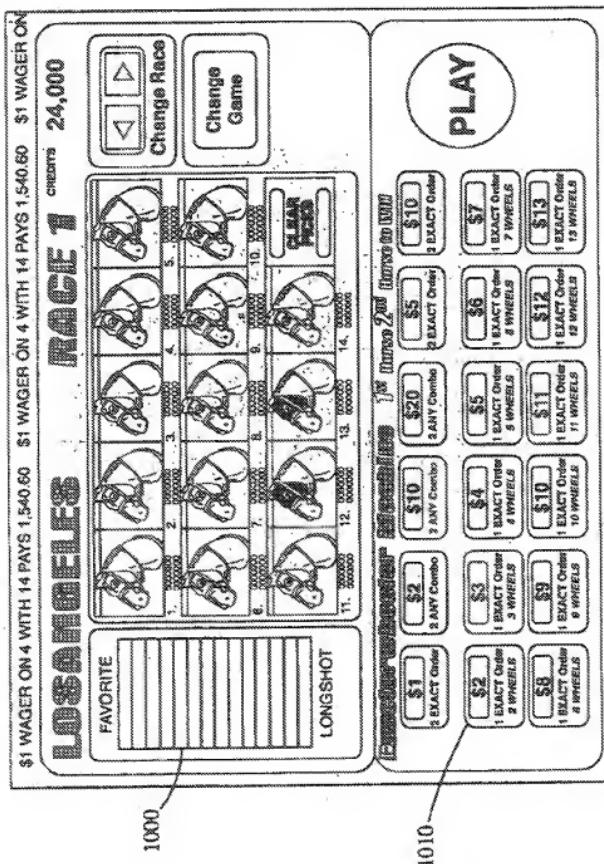


FIG. 10

WAGERING SYSTEM

This is a Continuation of International Application No. PCT/CA00/00443 filed May 1, 2000 which designated the U.S.

This application claims the benefit of PCT Application No. PCT/CA00/00443, filed May 1, 2000 and U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/131,806 filed Apr. 30, 1999.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to gaming. In particular, the present invention relates to facilitating wagering on race events.

BACKGROUND

Wagering on race events, such as horse races and dog races, typically takes the form of either fixed odds wagering or the more common parimutuel wagering. Fixed odds wagering is a system by which the return for a particular wager is determined in accordance with the payout odds assigned to the associated bet. Fixed odds wagering is popular from the perspective of wager recipients (e.g., betting parlors) since it places a limit on the magnitude of the payout in the event of a win. Fixed odds wagering is also popular from the perspective of wagers since it provides a measure of certainty on the possible payout.

Parimutuel wagering is a system by which a wagering pool is established for the receipt of bets, and the proceeds of the pool are divided amongst holders of winning wagers in accordance with the number and types of winning wagers and the magnitude of each wager. Parimutuel wagering is popular from the perspective of the wager recipients (e.g., race track owners), since the recipient typically receives a fixed percentage of the pool prior to the payout to the winning wager holders. Also, parimutuel wagering is popular from the perspective of the wageror since the return on a particular wager is proportional to the size of the wagering pool and, therefore, can exceed the fixed odds return of the bet. However, parimutuel wagering also suffers from a number of disadvantages.

Firstly, parimutuel wagering often requires detailed knowledge of betting terminology (e.g., win, place, show, exacta, trifecta, etc. wager types). Secondly, parimutuel wagering often requires the wageror to be conversant with betting terms, and to have knowledge of race committee handicapping. For example, for horse racing, successful handicapping requires a consideration of several factors, including track conditions, horse record, and jockey record for each contestant horse. Consequently, parimutuel wagering may not provide wager recipients with a significant return since novices may be intimidated by the knowledge required and either make only minimal wagers or no wagers at all.

Therefore, attempts have been made to improve on the conventional parimutuel wagering systems to encourage wagering. For instance, AmTote International, Inc. markets video terminals which remove the need for a wageror to interact with a human wager recipient. The video terminal consists of a touch-sensitive CRT display, a card reader, and a central processing unit in communication with the CRT display, the card reader and a remote wagering computer for processing desired wagers. To place a wager, the wageror purchases a wager card, inserts the wager card into the card reader, and then selects the desired track, the desired horse(s), the wager type (e.g., win, place, show, exacta, trifecta, etc.), and the amount of the wager. Although the video

terminal allows the novice to conceal to a very limited extent his/her lack of familiarity with betting terminology and handicapping, it does little to encourage the novice to make wagers.

Therefore, it would be advantageous to provide a wagering system and method which encourages wagering on race events.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic view of the wagering network, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of the race providing system, according to an embodiment of the present invention, shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram of at least one wagering terminal, according to an embodiment of the present invention, shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the stand-up type at least one wagering terminal, according to an embodiment of the present invention, shown in FIGS. 1 and 3;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the tabletop type at least one wagering terminal, according to another embodiment of the present invention, shown in FIGS. 1 and 3;

FIG. 6 is an example screenshot of the information presented on a display of the standup type at least one wagering terminal, according to an embodiment of the present invention, shown in FIGS. 1, 3 and 4;

FIG. 7 is an example screenshot of the information presented on a display of the tabletop type at least one wagering terminal, according to an embodiment of the present invention, shown in FIGS. 1, 3 and 5;

FIG. 8 is a payout table for a "Win" wager type of at least one wagering terminal, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 9(a), 9(b), 9(c) and 9(d) comprise a flow chart of the wagering facilitated by the wagering system, according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 10 is another screen shot of the information presented on a display of the tabletop type of the at least one wagering terminal according to an embodiment of the present invention. The screen provides a color chart 1000 and wagering buttons 1010.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In an embodiment of the invention, referring to FIG. 1, a wagering network, denoted generally as 100, is shown comprising at least one wagering terminal 120 and a race providing system 110 in communication with the at least one wagering terminal. In an embodiment, the communications connection or network between the race providing system and the at least one wagering terminal comprises a closed connection or network, however the communications connection or network may instead comprise an open connection or network, such as the Internet, if the open connection or network has sufficient bandwidth for adequately servicing the at least one wagering terminal. Moreover, such a connection or network may be of any form including without limitation wire, cable or wireless.

The race providing system generally manages and processes various racing information, particularly wagering information associated with race events held at various race

even tracks. An example race providing system is Amotie International, Inc.'s totalisator system which processes racing information from or related to not only race events at which Amotie provides wagering transaction services but also race events unassociated with Amotie but for which racing information is provided through the Amotie totalisator system (e.g., racing information from or related to simulcast race events). The racing information may include race event information, such as the names and start positions of the race contestants (e.g., horses, dogs) running in each race event for which the race providing system has information, the distance of each such race event, the race event track name of each such race event, the start time of each such race event, etc. The racing information may also include odds information for each race contestant, betting pool information on the betting pool associated with each race event, handicapping information, such as the weather conditions, and the jockey name, race contestant age, win record, and number of days since the last race event for each race contestant, and/or race results information such as the race results at the end of each race event. The racing information may be any combination of the race event information, odds information, betting pool information, handicapping information, race result information and/or other information as needed for the effective operation of the at least one wagering terminal. Optionally, the racing information may also include audio and video data corresponding to some or all of the race events for which the race providing system has information.

In a typical race providing system, the racing information is generated internally within the race providing system and/or obtained from associated race event tracks and, if applicable, off-track betting locations/devices and/or other race providing systems (not shown in FIG. 1). A race providing system may also receive racing information from an information provider, unassociated with a particular race event track, supplying racing information (e.g., information services provided by Equibase Company LLC) (not shown in FIG. 1). Further, the at least one wagering terminal provides racing information to the race providing system, particularly betting pool information. In an embodiment, the race providing system includes information related to a number of race events at one or more race event tracks so as to provide the at least one wagering terminal with information regarding a substantially continuous succession of race events. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art (but not shown in FIG. 1), each race event track or other information provider may instead of or in addition to providing their racing information to or through the intermediate race providing system, provide the racing information directly to the at least one wagering terminal over a connection or network. However, in an embodiment, a race providing system is used.

As shown in FIG. 2, in an embodiment, the race providing system 110 comprises a system operator interface 200, a wagering terminal transceiver 210 for communicating with the at least one wagering terminal 120, a central processing unit (CPU) 220 in communication with the system operator interface and the wagering terminal transceiver, and memory 230 in communication with the CPU.

The system operator interface comprises a data display device 240, typically comprising at least one CRT display, for allowing a system operator to view, among other things, the racing information. The system operator interface also includes a data input device 250, such as a keyboard and/or mouse, for allowing the system operator to enter control commands through the system operator interface. The con-

trol commands include commands for configuring racing information to be transmitted to the at least one wagering terminal, commands for configuring the wager processing of the race providing system, and where applicable, commands for configuring the wager type of the at least one wagering terminal.

The wagering terminal transceiver for communicating with the at least one wagering terminal is one or more mechanisms to send all or some of the racing information to the at least one wagering terminal and, where applicable, to send any other information to the at least one wagering terminal. The wagering terminal transceiver for communicating with the at least one wagering terminal is also configured to receive wagering information from the at least one wagering terminal for provision to the wagering processor. Such mechanisms may be typical communication interfaces. In an embodiment, the racing information is manipulated and formatted for sending to the at least one wagering terminal. Further, the other information sent to the at least one wagering terminal may include one or more sets of quick pick race contestant(s) and one or more least chosen race contestants for a wager type, particularly the one or more race contestants for a wager type that may yield a payout of the entire pool, both as described in more detail below.

The memory includes processor instructions for the CPU to define a quick pick race contestant(s) selector 260 and a wager processor 270. The memory also includes a wager database 280 in communication with the wager processor. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, the memory may be non-volatile or volatile (e.g., RAM) memory or both. The wager database includes one or more wagering records that identify the network address of the at least one wagering terminal from which a wager has been placed and information regarding the wager transmitted from that at least one wagering terminal.

The wager processor is configured to receive wager information from the at least one wagering terminal (typically via the wagering terminal transceiver), to maintain the wager database with the received wager information and where applicable, to signal the appropriate at least one wagering terminal to initiate payout of winning wagers to the user of the at least one wagering terminal. Where the at least one wagering terminal is used to place parimutuel wagers, the wager processor is also configured to include the received wager information into the appropriate parimutuel pool and where applicable, obtain information on the size of the parimutuel pool for calculation of the relevant payout. Where, for example, the race providing system is connected to one or more other race providing systems, the wager processor transfers the received wager, where applicable, to the correct race providing system(s) so that the wager can be included in the appropriate parimutuel pool managed by that race providing system(s) and similarly, where applicable, obtain information on the size of the parimutuel pool from the relevant race providing system(s) for calculation of the relevant payout.

The quick pick race contestant(s) selector is used to generate one or more sets of quick pick race contestant(s) for each race event. Each set of quick pick race contestant(s) comprises one or more race contestants of a race event according to a specific wager type and is determined by a race contestant selection algorithm. The number of determined race contestants in a set of quick pick race contestant(s) primarily depends on the wager type. A set of quick pick race contestant(s) for a win, show or place wager type will comprise one race contestant. Similarly, a set of

quick pick race contestant(s) for an exacta wager type will comprise two race contestants.

The race contestant selection algorithm employs handicapping information and odds information to determine a set of race contestants for a particular race event according to a specific wager type. In an embodiment pertaining to horse racing, the algorithm analyzes for each race contestant of a particular race event the handicapping information including without limitation the race contestant's trainer statistics, race contestant's jockey statistics, the track condition of the race event, and the times between race events for the race contestant. Further, the algorithm analyzes for each race contestant of a particular race event the odds information, for example the difference between the "morning line" odds and current odds information for the race contestant. The quick pick value of each race contestant may then simply be a weighted value of the handicapping information and odds information associated with each race contestant. The quick pick values for the race contestants of a race event are then analyzed to determine a set of race contestants for a specific wager type for the particular race event, preferably an optimal set of race contestants to win the specific wager type for the particular race event. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, any number of race contestant selection algorithms are possible employing handicapping information and odds information to determine a set of race contestants for a specific wager type for a particular race event.

The quick pick race contestant(s) selector may also be implemented on the at least one wagering terminal in addition to or substitute of the quick pick race contestant(s) selector provided at the race providing system. Further, the quick pick race contestant(s) selector can determine the one or more sets of quick pick race contestant(s) automatically for each race event and/or determine the one or more sets of quick pick race contestant(s) for a race event upon request from or at the at least one wagering terminal.

In a variation, the quick pick race contestant(s) selector is configured to determine a number of sets of quick pick race contestant(s) using a number of different race contestant selection algorithms. For example, a different race contestant selection algorithm may simply be a version of a race contestant selection algorithm giving different weights to handicapping and odds information or may be a race contestant selection algorithm using different handicapping information and/or odds information to select one or more race contestant(s). The quick pick race contestant(s) selector is configured to use a different race contestant selection algorithm whenever a reselection command is received from an at least one wagering terminal in order to provide one or more new sets of quick pick race contestant(s) to that wagering terminal.

The CPU is in communication with the system operator interface, the wagering terminal transceiver and the memory. The CPU facilitates the operation of the race providing system including executing processor instructions defining the quick pick race contestant(s) selector and the wager processor. The CPU also facilitates, where applicable, the determination of one or more least chosen race contestants for a wager type, particularly the one or more race contestants for a wager type that will yield a payout of the entire pool, as described in more detail below.

Turning now to FIG. 3, a schematic diagram of an embodiment of an at least one wagering terminal 120 is shown comprising a display 300 for presenting information regarding race events received from the race providing system, a user interface 305 for placing wagers on race

events, a card read/write device 310 for receiving an electronic or magnetic-stripe card encoded with a user's account information, a ticket dispensing device 315 for providing a ticket comprising wager information for an elected race event, and a processor 320 for facilitating wagering on the selected next and other future race events and for communicating with the display, the user interface, the card read/write device and the ticket dispensing device.

In an embodiment, a user opens an account specifically for wagering which is credited and/or debited as required with monetary and/or other credit values. Such an account may be set-up, for example, manually with a clerk of the establishment controlling the at least one wagering terminal or electronically by the user through telephone or the Internet. Typically, an electronic/magnetic-stripe card is issued by the establishment to the user through, for example, a clerk or automated device, and is encoded with information identifying the user's account balance. The user can then credit and/or debit monetary or other credit values through, for example, the clerk or automated device.

To place one or more wagers, the user would introduce the card to the card read/write device, a form of a wagering value mechanism, of the at least one wagering terminal on which the user would like to place one or more wagers. Thus, the card read/write device of the at least one wagering terminal allows the user to supply the monetary or other credit value needed to place a wager. Further, in an embodiment, the card read/write device of the at least one wagering terminal facilitates the payout to the user of a winning wager. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, accounts that are not specifically set up for wagering such as bank accounts or credit accounts could be used and similarly, other types of electronic/magnetic-stripe cards such as credit cards or debit cards may be used.

Further forms of wagering value mechanisms may be provided in addition to or as a substitute for the card read/write device including a currency receiver (not shown) for receiving currency and, where applicable, a currency dispensing device (not shown) for dispensing currency payouts. The currency receiver allows the user to supply the monetary or other credit value needed to place a wager and may also be used to credit monetary or other credit value to a user's account, for example, stored on a card. The currency dispensing device may facilitate the payout to the user of a winning wager.

As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, the at least one wagering terminal may have electronic access, another form of a wagering value mechanism, to the user's account so that the user's account balance need not be on an electronic/magnetic-stripe or for that matter no card or currency device may be required. For example, the race providing system may provide facilities to access user accounts including the ability to credit and debit the user's account, to receive account information requests from the at least one wagering terminal, verify access to an account by a user using the at least one wagering terminal, etc. Alternatively, another system connected to the at least one wagering terminal may provide such access to user accounts such as credit card merchant services. The user accounts may be accounts specifically set up for wagering or may be general accounts not necessarily maintained at the race providing system such as credit or bank accounts. The at least one wagering terminal could use a card read/write device to get the necessary information for the user's account (for example, for credit and bank accounts) or could allow the user to provide the necessary information to access the user's account through the at least one wagering terminal.

ual's user interface. As will be apparent, any number of wagering value mechanisms known now or developed in the future may be employed to provide a wager amount and/or deliver a payout for a winning wager.

In an embodiment, the ticket dispensing device issues wager tickets to provide tangible evidence of a wager placed as well as to provide a means to obtain a payout of a winning wager in addition to or instead of payout via any one of the wager value mechanisms described above. The payout for a wager ticket can be obtained, for example, by providing the wager ticket to an automated machine that processes the wager ticket and provides a payout and/or credits a user's account. Alternatively, the payout can be obtained by presenting the wager ticket to a clerk who may provide the payout and/or credit a user's account. In an embodiment, the wager ticket includes, information about the wager including the race track name, race number and date of the wagered race event, the wager amount, the wager type, the selected race contestant(s) of the wager, and the user account balance. In an embodiment, the selected race contestant(s) are shown in detail for the particular wager type. For example, an exacta and 3 wheels bet would show in detail the race contestants of the 3 combinations of this wager.

The processor comprises a network interface 325 for communicating with the race providing system 110, and a central processing unit (CPU) 330 in communication with the display, the user interface, the card read/write device, and the network interface. The processor also includes a memory 335 in communication with the CPU.

The memory includes a quick pick race contestant(s) buffer 340 for receiving the quick pick race contestant(s) data for the race events received from the race providing system, a racing information buffer 345 for receiving racing information, including odds information, from the race providing system, and an account buffer 350 for recording the monetary value of funds in the user's account. The memory also includes processor instructions for the CPU to define a wagering processor 360, an account processor 365 and a race event selector 370. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, the various buffers and processor instructions may be combined into one or provided in alternate arrangements.

The race event selector communicates with the racing information buffer and the wagering processor. The race event selector is configured to select race event information received from the race providing system for presentation on the display. In an embodiment, the race event selector is configured to determine and make available for display information about a next race event which is scheduled to run at all or certain of the race event tracks for which the race providing system has supplied race event information. The race event selector is also configured to determine and make available for display future race events in time order at all or certain of the race event tracks for which the race providing system has supplied race event information. If more than one race event is scheduled to run at or about the same time, the race event selector selects information about one of the race events for display (for example, choosing a race event at a more preferred race event track). In this manner, the at least one wagering terminal may continuously provide a succession of race events to a user upon which to wager. As will be appreciated, some race events can only entertain certain types of wagers. For instance, superfecta wagering may not be permitted at a certain race event. Consequently, the race event selector may select for display only those race events for which the at least one wagering terminal is configured to receive wagers.

Further, the race event selector is configured to accept a next or previous race selection command from the user interface via the wagering processor, thereby allowing the user to view information regarding a next race event or future race events. For example, referring to FIG. 6, the user may "scroll" back and forth through a next and other future race events by starting time by touching the "Next Race" and "Previous Race" buttons/icons, each touch of the buttons/icons causing the wagering processor to present, as applicable, updated information on the display corresponding to the "previous" or "next" race event by start time. Essentially, the user is able to view (and thus wager on) in time order a next race event and other future race events for which the at least one wagering terminal has information. In an embodiment, a next and other future race events by starting time may be the next race events by starting time found at all of the race event tracks for which the race providing system has supplied race event information. In another embodiment, a next and other future race events by starting time may be the next and other future race events at the certain current race event track which is presented on the display of the at least one wagering terminal.

The race event selector is also configured to determine and make available for display race events at different race event tracks. In this regard, the race event selector is configured to accept a next or previous race event track selection command from the user interface via the wagering processor, thereby allowing the user to view information regarding a race event at different race event tracks. For example, referring to FIG. 6, the user may "scroll" through future race events at different race event tracks by touching the "Next Track" and "Previous Track" buttons/icons, each touch of the button/icons causing the wagering processor to present, as applicable, updated information on the display corresponding to the future race events at "previous" or "next" race event tracks. Essentially, the user is able to view (and thus wager on) race events at different race event tracks for which the at least one wagering terminal has information. In an embodiment, the race event track (of all of the race event tracks for which the race providing system has supplied race event information) having the next starting race event is presented, along with that next race event, on the display of the at least one wagering terminal in response to a "next" race event track command. In another embodiment, the next race event track in alphabetical order (of all of the race event tracks for which the race providing system has supplied race event information) is presented, along with next starting race event at that race event track, on the display of the at least one wagering terminal in response to a "next" race event track command.

The account processor is in communication with the card read/write device, the account buffer and the wagering processor. The account processor is configured for crediting and debiting, in accordance with the amount wagered and the outcome of the elected race event, the balance of a user's account. For example, the account processor determines whether the user has introduced an electronic/magnetic-stripe card to the card read/write device, and then establishes an account for the user in the account buffer. The balance of the user's account may be stored, for example, on the electronic/magnetic-stripe card which is introduced to the card read/write device. Information about the amount wagered and the outcome of the elected race event is supplied by the wagering processor. The account processor performs basic checks to ensure that the user's account has a credit, that the account has enough credit for the amount wagered and that the card is otherwise operating properly.

Information regarding some or all of those checks is communicated to the wagering processor in order to allow the wagering processor to submit a wager to the race providing system. In an embodiment, the account processor is also configured to request from the user an appropriate password or other identification information via the user interface before establishing the account for the user in the account buffer. In an embodiment, the electronic/magnetic-stripe card is specially designed and configured for the at least one wagering terminal. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, other types of cards may be used such as credit and debit cards.

The wagering processor communicates with the quick pick race contestants buffer, the racing information buffer and the account processor. The wagering processor is configured to display the race contestants of the displayed race event using the odds information stored in the racing information buffer. In an embodiment, race contestants are shown as differing shaded/color icons on the display depending on the odds information associated with the race contestants. A color palette may be provided on the at least one wagering terminal to identify the colors associated with the race contestants, namely colors ranging from favorite to long-shot. In an embodiment, the color palette is provided physically on the glasswork of the housing of the at least one wagering terminal although as will be apparent to those skilled in the art, the color palette may also, for example, be provided on the display or as part of a payout table (as described in more detail below with respect to FIG. 8). For example, a horse icon for a favorite horse race contestant may be shown in blue while a horse icon for a lesser favorite horse race contestant may be shown in purple (see, e.g., the color chart 1000 of FIG. 10). In an embodiment of the at least one wagering terminal, each differing shaded/color icon associated with a race contestant based on the win odds associated with the race contestant. If two race contestants have the same win odds, then the amount wagered on the race contestant in the win pool (if available) is used to select the favorite. Otherwise, whichever race contestant has the lower number assignment will be considered more favorite. In another embodiment of the at least one wagering terminal, each differing shaded/color icon is associated with a race contestant based on the amount wagered on the race contestant. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, any number of means of assigning one or more colors reflecting odds associated with a race contestant may be used.

The wagering processor may also be configured to display the potential estimated winning payout of a wager on one or more race contestants of a race event according to the wager type of or selected in the at least one wagering terminal. For example, a wagering terminal configured for or in which is selected, an exacta wager type may present on a display (see, e.g., the tickert-type display of FIG. 4 and associated description below) a combination of race contestants (such as horse 5 and horse 3) of the race event about which information is shown on the display (see, e.g., the CRT display of FIG. 4 and associated description below), that may yield a certain estimated winning payout (such as \$10,000 if horse 5 and horse 3 finish in that order in first and second place). In an embodiment, the greatest potential estimated winning payout(s) and associated race contestant(s) that need to be selected to win the estimated payout(s) is displayed according to the wager type of or selected in the at least one wagering terminal and the race event displayed on the at least one wagering terminal. In another example, a wagering terminal configured for or in which is selected, a superfecta wager type may present on a display (see, e.g., the

ticker-type display of FIG. 4 and associated description below) the current pool total of the race event about which information is shown on the display (see, e.g., the CRT display of FIG. 4 and associated description below), such that perhaps a certain unique winning wager combination of the superfecta wager type may yield a payout of the pool ("jackpot").

The wagering processor is also configured to receive wager information from the user interface and for selecting one or more race contestants for the wager. For example, the wagering processor receives through the user interface an instruction for a wager amount, for an elected race event, which is transmitted to the race providing system together with the elected race contestants once the user instructs through the user interface the submission of the wager. In an embodiment, referring to FIGS. 4 and 5, the at least one wagering terminal has buttons corresponding to certain wager amounts and/or combinations which when engaged by the user instruct the wagering processor the wager amount and/or combination and a play button which when engaged by the user instructs the wagering processor to submit the wager. In an embodiment, the wagering processor employs a default wager amount and/or combination, e.g., the lowest wager amount and/or the quick pick race contestants, when it is not instructed the wager amount and/or combination through the user interface but is instructed to submit the wager.

Through the user interface, the user also can manually select the one or more race contestants for a wager or select a set of quick pick race contestants(s) as provided in the quick pick race contestants buffer for the wager. As discussed below, the one or more sets of quick pick race contestants(s) may be supplied in a substantially continuous fashion to the wagering processor and/or as requested by the wagering processor (typically via the quick pick race contestants buffer). In an embodiment, the user can manually select one or more race contestants for a wager by touching a touch-sensitive screen of the display or may select a set of quick pick race contestants(s) by pressing the "Play" button of the at least one wagering terminal. In an embodiment, the wagering processor employs one or more race contestants from a set of quick pick race contestants(s) to complete a wager if all the necessary race contestants for the wager type have not been selected but the wagering processor is instructed nevertheless to submit the wager. In this fashion, the wager will comprise the race contestants(s) selected by the user and one or more race contestants(s) from the quick pick race contestants(s) needed to complete the wager of the applicable wager type.

The wagering processor is also configured to show on the display the race contestants that have been manually selected by the user or the race contestants in a set of quick pick race contestants(s). For example, in an embodiment, the user selection of a race contestant on a touch-sensitive display causes an icon corresponding to the race contestant to change in appearance to indicate the race contestant has been selected. Similarly, the icons of quick pick race contestants(s) may change in appearance to indicate their selection.

The wagering processor is also configured to receive information regarding the sufficiency of credit in a user's account from the account processor and to provide the amount wagered and the outcome of the elected race event to the account processor for crediting and/or debiting a user's account.

The wagering processor may also be configured to provide a prize to a user upon the submission of a wager. For

example, the submission of a wager may trigger, according to a prize selection algorithm, the provision of a prize to the user, for example, in the form of a credit of the user's account or a credit or other type of prize on a ticket provided from the ticket dispensing device. In an embodiment, the prize selection algorithm may simply be a random seed or else the prize selection algorithm may determine to provide a prize after every certain amount of wager submissions through the wagering terminal. In another embodiment, where the prize selection algorithm is implemented across the wagering system, the prize selection may determine to provide a prize to a particular wagering terminal after every certain amount of wager submissions through wagering terminals throughout the wagering system.

The wagering processor may also be configured to select one or more race contestants, according the applicable wager type, which represent the least chosen one or more race contestants for the wager type, particularly the one or more race contestants for the wager type that will yield a payout of the entire pool. Such selected race contestant(s) may be determined using the odds information and/or betting pool information or may be provided by the race providing system. In an embodiment, a button (labeled, for example, "Jackpot" button) is provided to allow the automatic selection of such one or more race contestants for a wager.

In a variation (not shown), the user interface includes a reselect button for initiating reselection of the race contestants, and the wagering processor is configured to reselect selection of race contestants upon receipt of the reselection command from the user interface. In this variation, the wagering processor is configured to issue a command to the race providing system to provide a one or more new sets of quick pick race contestants and then to select from the one or more new sets of quick pick race contestants provided by the race providing system. In this manner, the wagering processor typically selects different quick pick race contestants for each actuation of the select button.

The details of the wagering process of an embodiment, as facilitated by the processing instructions of the wagering processor, are explained in greater detail below in regards to FIG. 7.

Turning now to FIG. 4, an embodiment of the at least one wagering terminal 120 is shown comprising a display 300 for presenting information about the selected race events, a user interface 305 for viewing race event information and placing wagers on an elected race event, a card read/write device 310 for receiving an electronic or magnetic-stripe card encoded with a user's account information, a ticket dispensing device 315 for providing a ticket comprising wager information for an elected race event and a stand-up type housing 400 for retaining the display, the user interface, the card read/write device and the ticket dispensing device. The wagering terminal also includes a processor 320 (not shown) as discussed above for facilitating wagering on race events. The wagering terminal may also include a speaker (not shown) for playing audio associated with the wagering and race events information.

Preferrably, the at least one wagering terminal according this embodiment is configured for providing a wager in only a single wager type, and the housing includes a wager description, prominently displayed on the housing, identifying the wager type using words which explain the wager type in simple betting terminology. For example, the at least one wagering terminal may be configured to provide a win, place, show, win-place-show (a win, place and show bet on

a particular race (contestant), exacta, trifecta, superfecta, exacta and wheels, trifecta and wheels and superfecta and wheels wager type. Example wager descriptions include "Pick a Winner", "Pick Two Exact Order", and "Pick Three Exact Order". In an embodiment, the wager type of the at least one wagering terminal can be changed, for example, by manually configuring the at least one wagering terminal from one wager type (e.g., exacta) to another wager type (e.g., place) or by issuing a configuration change command from the race providing system to the at least one wagering terminal to cause the at least one wagering terminal to change from one wager type (e.g., exacta) to another wager type (e.g., place). Optionally, the configuration change command can be issued to the at least one wagering terminal that in its current configuration is able to process a wager type that is not available for next race event (about which information is made available for display and wagering on at least one wagering terminal).

The display comprises a CRT display 410 for displaying information regarding the race events and ticker-tape type display 420 for displaying select wagering information regarding the race events. Preferably, the CRT display comprises a touch-sensitive CRT display, including a touch-sensitive membrane (not shown) in communication with the processor for "scrolling" between next and previous race events and race event tracks and for manually selecting race contestants for an elected race event. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, any appropriate type of display may be used.

The user interface comprises a series of wager buttons 430, 440 for accepting wagers in certain wager (e.g., dollar) amounts and/or combinations. For example, referring to FIG. 4, button 430 may be engaged for a \$1 wager amount and button 440 may be engaged for a \$5 wager amount. Although not shown in FIG. 4, the wager buttons may also represent certain wager combinations, e.g., exacta and 2 wheels (see, e.g., buttons/icons 1010 in FIG. 10). The user interface also includes a bet submission button 450 for initiating transmission of a wager to the race providing system.

Turning to FIG. 5, another embodiment of the at least one wagering terminal 120 is shown comprising a display 300 for presenting information about the selected race events, a user interface 305 for viewing race event information and placing wagers on an elected race event, a card read/write device 310 for receiving an electronic or magnetic-stripe card encoded with a user's account information, a ticket dispensing device 315 for providing a ticket comprising wager information for an elected race event and a table-top type housing 500 for retaining the display, the user interface, the card read/write device and the ticket dispensing device. The wagering terminal also includes a processor 320 (not shown) as discussed above for facilitating wagering on race events. The wagering terminal may also include a speaker (not shown) for playing audio associated with the wagering and race events information.

The display comprises a CRT display 510 for displaying information regarding the race events and preferably, the CRT display comprises a touch-sensitive CRT display, including a touch-sensitive membrane (not shown) in communication with the processor for selecting the desired wager type, for selecting the desired wager amount, for "scrolling" between next and previous race events and/or next and previous race event tracks, for manually selecting race contestants for an elected race event and for initiating transmission of a wager to the race providing system. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, any appropriate type of display may be used.

Preferably, the at least one wagering terminal according to this embodiment is configured for providing a wager in a plurality of wager types, although as will be apparent it may be configured for a single wager type. Information presented on the display will facilitate easy selection of the wager type. For example, each time the user touches a portion of a touch-sensitive screen of the display associated with a button/icon to change the wager type of the at least one wagering terminal, the user scrolls through the various wager types offered by the at least one wagering terminal. Each time the user scrolls through the wager types offered by the at least one wagering terminal, the information regarding race events is presented according to the selected wager type. Alternatively, for example, the selection of the wager type may be performed by selecting a desired wager type in a menu presented on the display or by selection of icons corresponding to specific wager types offered by the at least one wagering terminal.

It should be understood that the configurations shown in FIGS. 4 and 5 are only an implementation for an at least one wagering terminal, and that other configurations are also envisaged. In a variation, not shown, the user interface includes a plurality of wager type buttons, each identifying a respective wager type (e.g., win, place, show, exacta, etc.), for facilitating placement of the wager according to one of a plurality of wager types.

In an embodiment of the at least one wagering terminal for a trifecta wager type or the at least one wagering terminal capable of selection of a trifecta wager type, a button and/or display icon may be provided for placing a \$1 trifecta wager amount for the three selected race contestants in the exact order as selected and another button and/or display icon may be provided for placing six \$1 trifecta wager amounts on the three selected race contestants in any order. Similarly, in an embodiment of the at least one wagering terminal for a superfecta wager type or the at least one wagering terminal capable of selection of a superfecta wager type, a button and/or display icon may be provided for placing a \$1 superfecta wager amount for the four selected race contestants in the exact order as selected and another button and/or display icon may be provided for placing 24 \$1 superfecta wager amounts on the four selected race contestants in any order.

In an embodiment of the at least one wagering terminal for an exacta and wheel wager type or the at least one wagering terminal capable of selection of an exacta and wheel wager type and referring to FIG. 16, a number of buttons and/or display icons 610 may be provided for placing various combinations and amounts of wagers according to this wager type. For example, there may be provided a button and/or display icon for placing a \$1 exacta wager amount for the two selected race contestants in the exact order as selected, a button and/or display icon for placing two \$1 exacta wager amounts on the two selected race contestants in any order, a button and/or display icon for placing a \$5 exacta wager amount for the two selected race contestants in the exact order as selected, a button and/or display icon for placing two \$5 exacta wager amounts on the two selected race contestants in any order, a button and/or display icon for placing a \$10 exacta wager amount for the two selected race contestants in the exact order as selected, and buttons and/or display icons each for placing X (where X is greater than or equal to two) number of \$1 exacta and wheel wager amounts on the one selected exacta race contestant and the X selected wheel race contestants selected.

In another variation, the at least one wagering terminal may be a personal computer or a handheld device with all

wagering functions provided on the display of the personal computer or handheld device for selection by use of a pointing device and/or designated keys on a keyboard associated with the personal computer or handheld device. In this variation, an electronic wager ticket mechanism may be provided in place of a physical wager ticket dispensing device. The electronic wager ticket mechanism would generate an electronic representation of the wager ticket that may be presented, for example, graphically on the display of the at least one wagering terminal. Further in this variation, a user may provide the relevant account information to the at least one wagering terminal instead of introducing an electronic or magnetic-stripe card to a card read/write device. For example, the user may manually enter the account information or employ any other electronic wallet or other automatic means for making the account information available to the wagering system. Many other variations of the wagering terminal will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art.

Turning to FIG. 6, an embodiment of a screen shown on a CRT display of a stand-up type at least one wagering terminal is depicted. The screen depicts information regarding Race 1 at the Los Angeles horse race track. More particularly, race event track information 600 ("Los Angeles") and the race event number information 605 ("Race 1") are shown. The screen also depicts account balance information 610 regarding the current balance of the user of the at least one wagering terminal. In an embodiment, if the user has an insufficient account balance to wager (e.g., an account balance less than the minimum wager amount of the at least one wagering terminal), the account balance information blinks on the display to indicate an insufficient account balance. Further, the account balance information will automatically update to show credits from winning wagers of the user and, for effect, an alarm may sound for credits from winning wagers.

Further, a number of horse head shaped icons, such as horse head icon 615, associated with the race contestants of the depicted race event are shown. Moreover, the race contestant start position information, such as race contestant start position information 620 ("1"), are associated with each icon so the user can know what race contestants to select. As is indicated on the screen, the user can select one or more race contestants in accordance with a wager type, by touching the icons. Further, in an embodiment, each horse head icon has a differently shaded/color harness. As discussed above, the different shades/colors may be used to denote differing odds information associated with each race contestant. When a user selects a race contestant on the touch-sensitive display, the icon corresponding to that race contestant changes appearance to indicate the race contestant has been selected. For example, a pick number 625 may be presented on the display to indicate the selection of the race contestant and, where applicable, the race contestant's order in selection of a set of race contestants. In an embodiment, the user can clear the selected race contestants(s) using a "Clear Picks" button/icon 630 in order to re-select one or more race contestants, as applicable, for a wager.

Further, the user may "scroll" through future race events at different race event tracks by touching the next 635 and previous 640 track buttons/icons, each touch of the buttons/icons causing the wagering processor to present, as applicable, updated information on the display corresponding to a next race event by start time at "previous" or "next" race event tracks, whether for example a race event track by alphabetical order or a race event track having the next starting race event. Similarly, the user may "scroll" through

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future race events by starting time, whether for example at a selected race event track or across all race event tracks, by touching the next 645 and previous 650 race buttons/icons, each touch of the icons causing the wagering processor to present, as applicable, updated information on the display corresponding to the "previous" or "next" race event by start time.

Turning to FIG. 7, an embodiment of a screen shown on a CRT display of a tabletop type at least one wagering terminal is depicted. The screen depicts information regarding Race 1 at the Los Angeles horse race track. More particularly, race event track information 700 ("Los Angeles"), and the race event number information 705 ("Race 1") are shown. The screen also depicts account balance information 715 regarding the current balance of the user of the at least one wagering terminal. In an embodiment, if the user has an insufficient account balance to wager (e.g., an account balance less than the minimum wager amount of the at least one wagering terminal), the account balance information blinks on the display to indicate an insufficient account balance. Further, the account balance information will automatically update to show credits from winning wagers of the user and, for effect, an alarm may sound for credits from winning wagers. Further, in an embodiment, a ladder-type display 710 for displaying select wagering information regarding the race events, such as potential payouts for selected race event contestants for the current wager type depicted on the screen, is provided.

Further, a number of horse head shaped icons, such as horse head icon 720, associated with the race contestants of the depicted race event are shown. Moreover, the race contestant start position information, such as race contestant start position information 725 ("1"), are associated with each icon so the user can know what race contestants to select. As is indicated on the screen, the user can select one or more race contestants, in accordance with a wager type, by touching the icons. Further, in an embodiment, each horse head icon has a differently shaded/color harness. As discussed above, the different shades/colors may be used to denote differing odds information associated with each race contestant. When a user selects a race contestant on the touch-sensitive display, the icon corresponding to that race contestant changes appearance to indicate the race contestant has been selected. For example, a pick number (not shown in FIG. 7) may be presented on the display to indicate the selection of the race contestant and, where applicable, the race contestant's order in selection of a set of race contestants. In an embodiment, the user can clear the selected race contestant(s) using a "Clear Picks" button/icon 730 in order to re-select one or more race contestants, as applicable, for a wager.

Further, the user may "scroll" through future race events at different race event tracks by touching the next and previous track buttons/icons (not shown), each touch of the buttons/icons causing the wagering processor to present, as applicable, updated information on the display corresponding to a next race event by start time at "previous" or "next" race event tracks, whether for example a race event track by alphabetical order or a race event track having the next starting race event. Similarly, the user may "scroll" through future race events by starting time, whether for example at a selected race event track or across all race event tracks, by touching the next 735 and previous 740 race buttons/icons, each touch of the icons causing the wagering processor to present, as applicable, updated information on the display corresponding to the "previous" or "next" race event by start time.

As discussed above, in the tabletop type wagering terminal, the wager type presented on the display can be changed by the user by touching the "Change Game" button/icon 745. So, by using the "Change Game" button/icon, the user may change the display to present a "Win" wager type as shown in FIG. 7 or scroll to any other wager type such as place, exacta, superfecta, etc. wager types offered by the at least one wagering terminal. For the "Win" wager type, for example, the screen comprises additional buttons/icons 750 corresponding to the win wager type of the at least one wagering terminal to allow the user to select the wager amount ("\\$1", "\\$5", "\\$10", "\\$20" buttons/icons) and to initiate the wager ("Play" button/icon). For other wager types, different additional buttons/icons may be provided as required by the particular wager type selected. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, the wager type change feature may also be provided in the standup or any other type of display for the at least one wagering terminal.

A variation of the screen of FIG. 7 may also be used for a personal computer or handheld device variation of the at least one wagering terminal. In this variation, the screen of FIG. 7 or another screen could provide the ability for a user to enter account information (as discussed above) through, for example, the touching of a button/icon that initiates an account information entry dialog. Further, the screen of FIG. 7 or another screen could permit the user to view race event video corresponding to the race event displayed on the at least one wagering terminal. So, as the race event displayed on the at least one wagering terminal changes, the race event video would change to correspond to the displayed race event. Also, the screen of FIG. 7 or another screen could provide the display of information regarding electronic wager tickets (as discussed above) corresponding to wagers placed by the user of the at least one wagering terminal. For example, representations of unofficial electronic wager tickets corresponding to user wagers can be displayed at the bottom of the screen of FIG. 7 to show the outstanding user wagers. As the user's wagers become official, the representations of those unofficial electronic wager tickets could drop off the display at the bottom of the screen of FIG. 7. Further, a monitor bets button/icon may be provided on the screen of FIG. 7 which allows the user to review the details of all unofficial and official electronic wager tickets.

Referring to FIG. 8, a payout table is depicted for a "Win" wager type of an at least one wagering terminal. The payout table includes a title 800 generally describing the wager type, such as the win wager type in FIG. 8, of the payout information included in the table. More particularly, the payout table includes columns 810 indicating the wager amount placed for a particular wager type, e.g., \\$1 placed on a win wager. The payout table further includes rows 820 indicating race contestants, e.g., identifying information for each race contestant or combinations of race contestants, such as the post position or name(s) and, if applicable, the corresponding icon color (as described above), ranked from favorite to longshot. The payout table then further includes information for each row-column combination 830 indicating the actual or potential payout for the wager represented by the row and column information according to the wager type of the payout table. So, for example, the intersection in the payout table of FIG. 8 of the \\$1 wager amount column and the favorite race contestant would provide information for the actual or potential payout of that wager. In an embodiment, the payout table is an electronic display that provides updated payout information depending on race event and/or wager type presented on the display of the at least one wagering terminal. Alternatively, where possible,

the payout table may be simply a printed table of actual or potential payout information. As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, payout tables may be provided for wager types other than the win wager type.

Referring to FIG. 9, the wagering facilitated according to an embodiment of the invention will be described. In this embodiment, the at least one wagering terminal is configured to provide a single wager type (although it may be reconfigured to a different wager type by a configuration change command). Where the at least one wagering terminal provides multiple wager types, the wagering facilitated by the wagering system according to that embodiment would query the user to select a particular wager type (not shown in FIG. 9) but would then operate according to the wagering described below in reference to FIG. 9. For example, the user interface may include a plurality of wager type buttons to allow the user to select a desired one of the wager types.

The account processor determines whether the user has introduced 905 an electronic/magnetic-stripe card to the card read/write device and if so, establishes 910 an account for the user in the account buffer if there is a credit in the account sufficient for the lowest wager amount available on the at least one wagering terminal and the card is otherwise operating properly. If the user has not introduced an electronic/magnetic-stripe card to the card read/write device, the account processor keeps determining whether a card has been introduced and the user will be unable to submit a wager or scroll through race events, e.g., the user interface is inactive, until a card is introduced. Optionally, the account processor may make available for display a warning to the user if the card is not operating properly, the user's account does not exist or there is an insufficient credit in the account. In an embodiment (not shown in FIG. 9), the account processor of the at least one wagering terminal is configured to request from the user an appropriate password or other identification information via the user interface before establishing the account for the user in the account buffer. In an embodiment (not shown in FIG. 9), a user may scroll through race events without having to introduce an electronic/magnetic-strip card to the card read/write device. In an embodiment (not shown in FIG. 9), only the buttons/icons corresponding to wager amounts and combinations available for wagering in view of the balance available in the user's account and the particular race event displayed will be active. For example, available wager amount and combination buttons/icons are lighted or shown when the user has a sufficient balance for those wager amounts and/or the wager combination is possible at the displayed race event. Similarly, the inactive wager amount and combination buttons/icons are dark or not shown when the user has an insufficient balance for those wager amounts and/or the wager combination is not possible at the displayed race event.

Once a card is introduced, the race event selector of the at least one wagering terminal queries the racing information received from the race providing system, and identifies 915 a next and other future race events, as described in more detail above, for display on the at least one wagering terminal via the wagering processor. At the outset and as the wagering pools associated with displayed race events close, the race event selector identifies a next race event for display on the at least one wagering terminal. As a user scrolls through race events by, for example, next or previous race event and/or race event track selection commands, the race event selector identifies other future race events for display on the at least one wagering terminal.

Thus, in an embodiment, a next race event is displayed on the at least one wagering terminal at the outset when a user

introduces a card to the at least one wagering terminal. Thereafter, the user may scroll through race events and race events tracks but when the pool closes for a displayed race event, a further next race is displayed on the at least one wagering terminal. In essence, the race providing system provides a substantially continuous stream of racing information to the at least one wagering terminal in order to provide a substantially continuous display of information regarding a succession of race events. Further, the race providing system may also provide one or more sets of quick pick race contestants(s) as other information pertaining to the racing information in a substantially continuous fashion to the at least one wagering terminal and/or as requested by the at least one wagering terminal. Optionally, the at least one wagering terminal may receive a configuration change command to change the wager type assigned to the at least one wagering terminal.

The wagering processor makes available for display 920 the information regarding the next and other future race event, particularly the race event track name and race event number, as identified or supplied by the race event selector. Particularly, the wagering processor makes available for display, as identified or supplied by the race event selector, next race events upon the introduction of a card to the at least one wagering terminal or as the pool for a displayed race event closes and next and other future race events scrolled through by the use of next and previous race events and race event tracks selection commands.

The wagering processor further makes available for display a number of icons corresponding to the race contestants in the displayed race event, including icons of varying shade/color to identify the different odds information associated with each race contestant. The wagering processor uses, for example, the odds information in the racing information buffer to assign varying shades/colors to the icons associated with each race contestant of the displayed race event.

The wagering processor also determines 925 whether the user has activated a button/icon to scroll through race events and/or race event tracks i.e. the "Next Race", "Previous Race", "Next Track" or "Previous Track" buttons/icons. If so, the race event selector determines a next or other future race event for display and the wagering processor makes available for display information regarding the user elected next or other future race event, determined by the race event selector, resulting from the scrolling.

If an account is established, the wagering processor queries 930 whether a wager amount has been selected (for example, via selection of one of the wager buttons). If not, the at least one wagering terminal continues to determine next and/or other future race events for display, display information regarding such race events, and present on the display information regarding elected next or other future race events resulting from the scrolling through race events and/or race event tracks. In an embodiment (not shown in FIG. 9), the wagering processor employs a default wager amount, e.g., the lowest wager amount, when bet submission has been activated but no wager amount has been selected.

If a wager amount has been selected, the wagering processor waits for one or more race contestants to be selected by awaiting 935 the activation of the bet submission button i.e. the "Play" button. For example, the race contestant(s) may be manually selected 940 via touching a portion of a touch-sensitive screen of the display associated with the icon(s) of the selected race contestants (and then hits the "Play" button to submit the wager). If the user hits the

"Play" button without selecting race contestants or only a partial number of the needed race contestants (not shown), the wagering processor queries the quick pick race contestant(s) buffer to derive a suitable set of quick pick race contestant(s) to complete the wager (as discussed in more detail above), in accordance with the wager type assigned to the at least one wagering terminal. If the user at any point touches a "Next Race", "Previous Race", etc. button/icon, the wagering is reset and the account processor waits for a new wager.

In a variation not shown in FIG. 9, the user interface may include a select button for initiating selection of the race contestants. Accordingly, in this variation, the user places a wager by selecting one of the wager amount buttons. The user can then manually select one or more race contestants(s) according to the wager type or activate a select button causing the wagering processor to query the quick pick race contestant(s) buffer and display a set of quick pick race contestant(s) in accordance with the wager type by, for example, changing the appearance of the icon(s) associated with those race contestants(s). If the selected race contestants are deemed by the user to be unacceptable, the user can manually select new race contestants(s) or re-activate the select button, causing the wagering processor to obtain and display a set of quick pick race contestant(s), in accordance with the wager type, picked using an alternate algorithm for selecting quick pick race contestant(s). Once the race contestants are deemed by the user to be acceptable, the user completes the wager by activating the bet submission button i.e. touching the "Play" button. As will be apparent, error checking loops may be employed with related dialogues for display to the user.

If the selected race contestant(s) were picked manually by the user, the wagering processor then presents 950 the manually selected race contestant(s) on the display by, for example, changing the appearance of the icon(s) associated with those race contestants(s) (for example, as described above in more detail). If the selected race contestants(s) are deemed by the user to be unacceptable, the user can override the selection by, for example, touching a button or a portion of a touch-sensitive screen of the display associated with an icon for resetting the manually selected race contestants(s) so a new set of selected race contestants(s) can be manually chosen or a set of quick pick race contestants(s) can be chosen by pressing the "Play" button. Alternatively, the user can continue to pick race contestants until too many race contestants have been chosen at which point the selection of race contestants is reset so a new set of selected race contestants(s) can be manually chosen or a set of quick pick race contestants(s) can be chosen by pressing the "Play" button. If the user at any point touches a "Next Race", "Previous Race", etc. button/icon the wagering is reset 950 and the account processor waits for a new wager. If the manually selected race contestants(s) are deemed by the user to be acceptable, the user completes the wager by activation of the bet submission button i.e. the "Play" button. As will be apparent, error checking loops may be employed with related dialogues for display to the user.

Once the bet submission has been activated, the account processor queries 945 the account buffer to determine whether there are sufficient funds in the user's account for the wager. If the account processor determines that the account does not have sufficient funds for the wager, the wagering processor is informed 950 of the insufficient funds and the wagering processor presents a message on the display indicating that the user has an insufficient credit balance for the wager. The account processor then checks for

next race events, as applicable, and waits for a new wager. In an embodiment, the screen of the display of the at least one wagering terminal shows a spinning reel animation with sound effects until the wager ticket is printed or displayed. When the animation is finished, the screen optionally will pause to show the race contestant(s) selected for the wager centered on the middle of the screen. After the pause, the screen will revert back to where another wager may be placed.

If the account processor determines that the account does not have sufficient funds for the wager, the wagering processor then determines 955 whether the wagering period has expired for the race event upon which the wager has been placed, that is, if the race event has started or the ability to wager on the race event has been closed. If the wagering processor determines that the wagering period has expired, the at least one wagering terminal will present 960 on the display a warning to the user to indicate that the wagering period has expired, continues to determine next and future race events for display, displays information regarding such race events, etc. As will be apparent, since the race providing system continuously updates the at least one wagering terminal with information on the future race events, shortly after a wagering period expires the at least one wagering terminal will display information about a next race event.

If the wagering processor determines that the wagering period has not expired, the wagering processor transmits 965 the wager amount and the selected race contestant(s) to the race providing system. The race providing system stores 970 the wager information in the wager database, together with the network address of the at least one wagering terminal. The race providing system continues to receive wagers until the end of the wagering period of a race event. The wagering terminal may also issue 975 a ticket corresponding to the wager, which can be used to obtain a payout for a winning wager via an automatic device and/or a clerk. The delivery of a ticket may be initiated by the activation of the bet submission button i.e. the "Play" button and/or by a separate button/icon activated by the user to request the printing of a ticket.

In an embodiment, at the end of a race event, the wagering processor of the race providing system queries 980 the wager database to identify the winning wagers, calculates the payout payable to each user in accordance with the amount wagered (and either the payout odds if the wager was a fixed odds wager, or the size of the parimutuel pool if the wager was a parimutuel wager), and then transmits to each winning wagering terminal (using the network address stored in the wager database) a data packet indicating the payout amount.

Upon receipt of the winning contestant data packet, if the user's account is still established in the at least one wagering terminal and a ticket with respect to the winning wager has not been dispensed, the at least one wagering terminal presents 985 on the display information regarding a winning payout. Upon receipt of the payout data packet and if the user's account is still established in the at least one wagering terminal, the account processor updates the user's account including, if appropriate, updating the account information on an electronic/magnetic-stripe card. The user can then place a wager on the next race event, or else discontinue wagering by closing the user's account on the at least one wagering terminal by, for example, disengaging the electronic/magnetic-stripe card from the card read/write device. If the wagering terminal is still active 990, the wagering terminal will determine whether a user has introduced a card, identify future race events, etc.

The detailed descriptions may have been presented in terms of program procedures executed on a computer or network of computers. These procedural descriptions and representations are the means used by those skilled in the art to most effectively convey the substance of their work to others skilled in the art. The embodiments of the invention may be implemented as apparent to those skilled in the art in hardware or software, or any combination thereof. The actual software code or hardware used to implement the invention is not limiting of the invention. Thus, the operation and behavior of the embodiments often will be described without specific reference to the actual software code or hardware components. The absence of such specific references is feasible because it is clearly understood that artisans of ordinary skill would be able to design software and hardware to implement the embodiments of the invention based on the description herein with only a reasonable effort and without undue experimentation.

A procedure is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence of operations leading to a desired result. These operations comprise physical manipulations of physical quantities. Usually, though not necessarily, these quantities take the form of electrical or magnetic signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated. It proves convenient at times, principally for reasons of common usage, to refer to these signals as bits, values, elements, symbols, characters, terms, numbers, objects, attributes or the like. It should be noted, however, that all of these and similar terms are to be associated with the appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient labels applied to these quantities.

Further, the manipulations performed are often referred to in terms, such as adding or comparing, which are commonly associated with mental operations performed by a human operator. No such capability of a human operator is necessary, or desirable in most cases, in any of the operations of the invention described herein, the operations are machine operations. Useful machines for performing the operations of the invention include general purpose digital computers, special purpose computers or similar devices.

Each operation of the method may be executed on any general computer, such as a mainframe computer, personal computer or the like and pursuant to one or more, or a part of one or more, program modules or objects generated from any programming language, such as C++, Java, Fortran, etc. And still further, each operation, or a file, module, object or the like implementing such operation, may be executed by special purpose hardware or a circuit module designed for that purpose. For example, the invention may be implemented as a firmware program loaded into non-volatile storage or a software program loaded from or into a data storage medium as machine-readable code, such code being instructions executable by an array of logic elements such as a processor or other digital signal processing unit. Any data handled in such processing or created as a result of such processing can be stored in any memory as is conventional in the art. By way of example, such data may be stored in a temporary memory, such as in the RAM of a given computer system or subsystem. In addition, or in the alternative, such data may be stored in longer-term storage devices, for example, magnetic disks, rewritable optical disks, and so on.

In the case of diagrams depicted herein, they are provided by way of example. There may be variations to these diagrams or the operations described herein without departing from the spirit of the invention. For instance, in certain cases, the operations may be performed in differing order, or operations may be added, deleted or modified.

An embodiment of the invention may be implemented as an article of manufacture comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means thereon for executing the method operations of the invention, a program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by a machine to perform the method operations of the invention, or a computer program product. Such an article of manufacture, program storage device or computer program product may include, but is not limited to, CD-ROM, CD-R, CD-RW, diskettes, tapes, hard drives, computer system memory (e.g. RAM or ROM), and/or the electronic, magnetic, optical, biological or other similar embodiment of the program (including, but not limited to, a carrier wave modulated, or otherwise manipulated, to convey instructions that can be read, demodulated/decoded and executed by a computer). Indeed, the article of manufacture, program storage device or computer program product may include any solid or fluid transmission medium, whether magnetic, biological, optical, or the like, for storing or transmitting signals readable by a machine for controlling the operation of a general or special purpose computer according to the method of the invention and/or to structure its components in accordance with a system of the invention.

An embodiment of the invention may also be implemented in a system. A system may comprise a computer that includes a processor and a memory device and optionally, a storage device, an output device such as a video display and/or an input device such as a keyboard or computer mouse. Moreover, a system may comprise an interconnected network of computers. Computers may equally be in stand-alone form (such as the traditional desktop personal computer) or integrated into another apparatus (such as a cellular telephone).

The system may be specially constructed for the required purposes to perform, for example, the method of the invention or it may comprise one or more general purpose computers as selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program in accordance with the teachings herein stored in the computer(s). The system could also be implemented in whole or in part as a hard-wired circuit or as a circuit configuration fabricated into an application-specific integrated circuit. The invention presented herein is not inherently related to a particular computer system or other apparatus. The required structure for a variety of these systems will appear from the description given.

While this invention has been described in relation to certain embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that other embodiments according to the generic principles disclosed herein, modifications to the disclosed embodiments and changes in the details of construction, arrangement of parts, compositions, processes, structures and materials selection all may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Changes, including equivalent structures, acts, materials, etc., may be made, within the purview of the appended claims, without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention in its aspects. Thus, it should be understood that the above described embodiments have been provided by way of example rather than as a limitation of the invention and that the specification and drawing(s) are, accordingly, to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense. As such, the invention is not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown above but rather is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and novel features disclosed in any fashion herein.

I claim:

1. A wagering system comprising:
a race providing system facilitating wagering on race events at race event tracks and providing information regarding the race events; and
at least one wagering terminal in communication with the race providing system, the at least one wagering terminal including a race event selector to select next race events for wagering, the race event selector being configured to determine and make available for wagering future race events in a future time order at multiple race event tracks for which the race providing system has supplied race event information,
a display to present information regarding the selected race events,
a user interface to place a wager on an elected race event of the selected race events displayed, and
a wagering value mechanism to provide a wager amount for the wager on the elected race event.
2. The wagering system of claim 1, wherein at least one of the race providing system and the at least one wagering terminal includes a quick pick race contestant(s) selector receiving handicapping information and odds information from the race providing system to select one or more race contestants of an elected race event for the wager in accordance with the received handicapping information and track odds information.
3. The wagering system of claim 2, wherein the one or more race contestants of an elected race event are selected by:
determining a quick pick value for each race contestant based upon a weighted value of the handicapping information and the track odds information associated with each race contestant; and
analyzing the quick pick value for each race contestant to determine a set of race contestants for a specific wager type for the elected race event.
4. The wagering system of claim 3, wherein the handicapping information associated with each race contestant includes:
race contestant's trainer statistics;
race contestant's jockey statistics;
the track condition of the race event; and
the times between race events for the race contestant.
5. The wagering system of claim 3, wherein the odds information associated with each race contestant includes a difference between the "morning line" track odds and current track odds information for the race contestant.
6. The wagering system of claim 1, wherein at least one wagering terminal is configured for providing the wager in only a single wager type.
7. The wagering system of claim 1, wherein the at least one wagering terminal is configured to facilitate placement of the wager in accordance with one of a plurality of user-selectable wager types.
8. The wagering system of claim 1, wherein the wagering value mechanism includes a card receiver for receiving a card having information pertaining to a user account, and an account processor connected to the card receiver for debiting the user account with the wager amount.
9. A wagering terminal in communication with a race providing system that facilitates wagering on race events and provides information regarding the race events at race event tracks, comprising:
a race event selector to select next race events for wagering, the race event selector being configured to

- determine and make available for wagering, multiple future race events that are selected as selected race events;
a display to present information regarding the selected race events;
a user interface to place a wager on to selected race events displayed; and
a wagering value mechanism to provide a wager amount for the wager on the selected race event.
10. The wagering terminal of claim 9, further comprising a quick pick race contestant(s) selector receiving handicapping information and track odds information from the race providing system to select one or more race contestants of the selected race event for the wager in accordance with the received handicapping information and track odds information.
11. The wagering terminal of claim 9, further comprising a wagering processor to receive one or more race contestants of selected race events for the wager selected in accordance with handicapping and track odds information.
12. The wagering terminal of claim 11, wherein the one or more race contestants of a selected race event are selected by:
determining a quick pick value for each race contestant based upon a weighted value of the handicapping information and the track odds information associated with each race contestant; and
analyzing the quick pick value for each race contestant to determine a set of race contestants for a specific wager type for the elected race event.
13. The wagering terminal of claim 12, wherein the handicapping information associated with each race contestant includes:
race contestant's trainer statistics;
race contestant's jockey statistics;
the track condition of the race event; and
the times between race events for the race contestants.
14. The wagering terminal of claim 12, wherein the track odds information associated with each race contestant includes a difference between the "morning line" track odds and current track odds information for the race contestants.
15. The wagering terminal of claim 9, wherein the wagering terminal is configured for providing the wager in only a single wager type.
16. The wagering terminal of claim 9, wherein the wagering terminal is configured to facilitate placement of the wager in accordance with one of a plurality of user-selectable wager types.
17. The wagering terminal of claim 9, wherein the wagering value mechanism includes a card receiver for receiving a card having information pertaining to a user account, and an account processor connected to the card receiver for debiting the user account with the wager amount.
18. The wagering terminal of claim 9, wherein the user interface includes:
icons corresponding to race contestants in a race event; and
at least one of a button or icon by which a user scrolls through next and other future race events by starting time, the activation of the at least one of a button or icon to scroll causing the user interface to present new icons corresponding to the race contestants of the scrolled to next and other future race events.
19. The wagering terminal of claim 18, wherein the user interface further includes:

at least one of a button or icon by which a user scrolls through next race events at different race event tracks, the activation of the at least one of a button or icon to scroll causing the user interface to present new icons corresponding to the race contestants of the next race event by start time at the scrolled to race event tracks. 20. The wagering terminal of claim 18, wherein the icons corresponding to race contestants are shaped in the form of a horse head.

21. The wagering terminal of claim 18, wherein at least some of the icons corresponding to the race contestants are colored differently to indicate odds information associated with the race contestant corresponding to the icon.

22. A wagering terminal receiving information regarding race events, comprising:

- a display to present information regarding selected next race events for wagering, the selected race events being selected by a race event selector being configured to determine and make available for wagering, multiple future race events, from among a group of future race events;

- a user interface to place a wager on an elected race event of the selected race events displayed;

- a wagering value mechanism to provide a wager amount for the wager on the elected race event; and

- a wagering processor to determine one or more race contestants of an elected race event for the wager selected in accordance with handicapping information and track odds information.

23. The wagering terminal of claim 22, wherein the one or more race contestants of an elected race event are selected by:

- determining a quick pick value for each race contestant based upon a weighted value of the handicapping information and the track odds information associated with each race contestant; and

- analyzing the quick pick value for each race contestant to determine a set of race contestants for a specific wager type for the elected race event.

24. The wagering terminal of claim 23, wherein the handicapping information associated with each race contestant includes:

- race contestant's trainer statistics;

- race contestant's jockey statistics;

- the track condition of the race event; and

- the times between race events for the race contestant.

25. The wagering terminal of claim 23, wherein the track odds information associated with each race contestant includes a difference between the "morning line" track odds and current track odds information for the race contestant.

26. The wagering terminal of claim 22, wherein the wagering terminal is configured for providing the wager in only a single wager type.

27. The wagering terminal of claim 22, wherein the wagering terminal is configured for facilitating placement of the wager in accordance with one of a plurality of user-selectable wager types.

28. The wagering terminal of claim 22, wherein the user interface includes:

- icons corresponding to race contestants in a race event; and

- at least one of a button or icon by which a user scrolls through next and other future race events by starting time, the activation of the at least one of a button or icon to scroll causing the user interface to present new

icons corresponding to the race contestants of the scrolled to next and other future race events.

29. The wagering terminal of claim 28, wherein the user interface further includes:

- at least one of a button or icon by which a user scrolls through next race events at different race event tracks, the activation of the at least one of a button or icon to scroll causing the user interface to present new icons corresponding to the race contestants of the next race event by start time at the scrolled to race event tracks.

30. The wagering terminal of claim 28, wherein the icons corresponding to race contestants are shaped in the form of a horse head.

31. The wagering terminal of claim 28, wherein at least some of the icons corresponding to the race contestants are colored differently to indicate odds information associated with the race contestant corresponding to the icon.

32. A wagering method, comprising:

- receiving information regarding race events from a race providing system automatically providing multiple future race events at race event tracks on which wagers may be placed;

- selecting race events from said multiple race events for wagering on which future race events wagering will be performed;

- displaying information regarding the selected race events in a wagering terminal;

- receiving user instructions through a user interface of the wagering terminal for placing a wager on an elected race event of the selected race events displayed; and

- receiving a wager amount for the wager on the elected race event further comprising:

- receiving handicapping information and track odds information from the race providing system; and

- a program selecting one or more race contestants of an elected race event for the wager in accordance with the received handicapping information and track odds information

33. A computer comprising a program product including computer program code to cause a processor to perform a

wagering method, the wagering method comprising:

- the program determining and making available for wagering, future race events in a future time order at multiple race event tracks for which the program has enabled provision of race event information

- receiving the race event information regarding race events from a race providing system;

- selecting next race events for wagering;

- displaying information regarding the selected race events in a wagering terminal;

- receiving user instructions through a user interface of the wagering terminal for placing a wager on an elected race event of the selected race events displayed; and

- receiving a wager amount for the wager on the elected race event.

34. The computer program product of claim 33, the wagering method further comprising:

- receiving handicapping information and track odds information from the race providing system; and

- selecting one or more race contestants of an elected race event for the wager in accordance with the received handicapping information and track odds information.

35. The computer program product of claim 33, the wagering method further comprising receiving one or more race contestants of an elected race events for the wager selected in accordance with handicapping and track odds information.

36. The computer program product of claim 34, wherein the one or more race contestants of an elected race event are selected by:

determining a quick pick value for each race contestant based upon a weighted value of the handicapping information and track odds information associated with each race contestant; and
analyzing the quick pick value for each race contestant to determine a set of race contestants for a specific wager type for the elected race event.

37. The computer program product of claim 36, wherein the handicapping information associated with each race contestant includes:

race contestant's trainer statistics;
race contestant's jockey statistics;
the track condition of the race event; and
the times between race events for the race contestant.

38. The computer program product of claim 36, wherein the track odds information associated with each race contestant includes a difference between the "morning line" track odds and current track odds information for the race contestant.

39. The computer program product of claim 33, wherein the computer program product is configured for providing the wager in only a single wager type.

40. The computer program product of claim 33, wherein the computer program product is configured for providing the wager in accordance with one of a plurality of user-selectable wager types.

41. The computer program product of claim 33, wherein receiving a wager amount for the wager includes accessing a user account electronically and debiting the user account with the wager amount.

42. The computer program product of claim 33, wherein displaying information regarding the selected race events in a wagering terminal includes:

displaying icons corresponding to race contestants in a race event; and
providing at least one of a button or icon by which a user scrolls through next and other future race events by staffing time, the activation of the at least one of a button or icon to scroll causing the display of new icons corresponding to the race contestants of the scrolled to next and other future race events on which wagers may be placed at that time.

43. The computer program product of claim 42, wherein displaying information regarding the selected race events in a wagering terminal further includes:

providing at least one of a button or icon by which a user scrolls through next race events at different race event tracks, the activation of the at least one of a button or icon to scroll causing the display of new icons corresponding to the race contestants of the next race event by start time at the scrolled to race event tracks.

44. The computer program product of claim 42, wherein the icons corresponding to race contestants are shaped in the form of a horse head.

45. The computer program product of claim 42, wherein at least some of the icons corresponding to the race contestants are colored differently to indicate odds information associated with the race contestant corresponding to the icon.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,722,980 B2
DATED : April 20, 2004
INVENTOR(S) : Andrew M. Stronach

Page 1 of 1

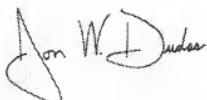
It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Title page.

Insert Item -- [73] Assignee: ASIP Holdings, Inc., Aurora, Ontario (CA) --.

Signed and Sealed this

Sixth Day of September, 2005



JON W. DUDAS
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(54) NETWORKED GAMING DEVICES THAT END A BONUS AND CONCURRENTLY INITIATE ANOTHER BONUS

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) Int. Cl. A63F 9/24

(52) U.S. Cl. 463/25; 463/20; 463/16

(58) Field of Search 463/20, 19, 18, 463/17, 16, 12, 13, 40, 41, 42, 25, 26, 27, 28

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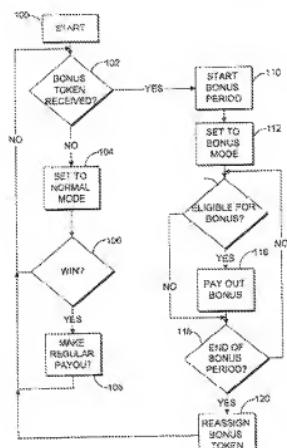
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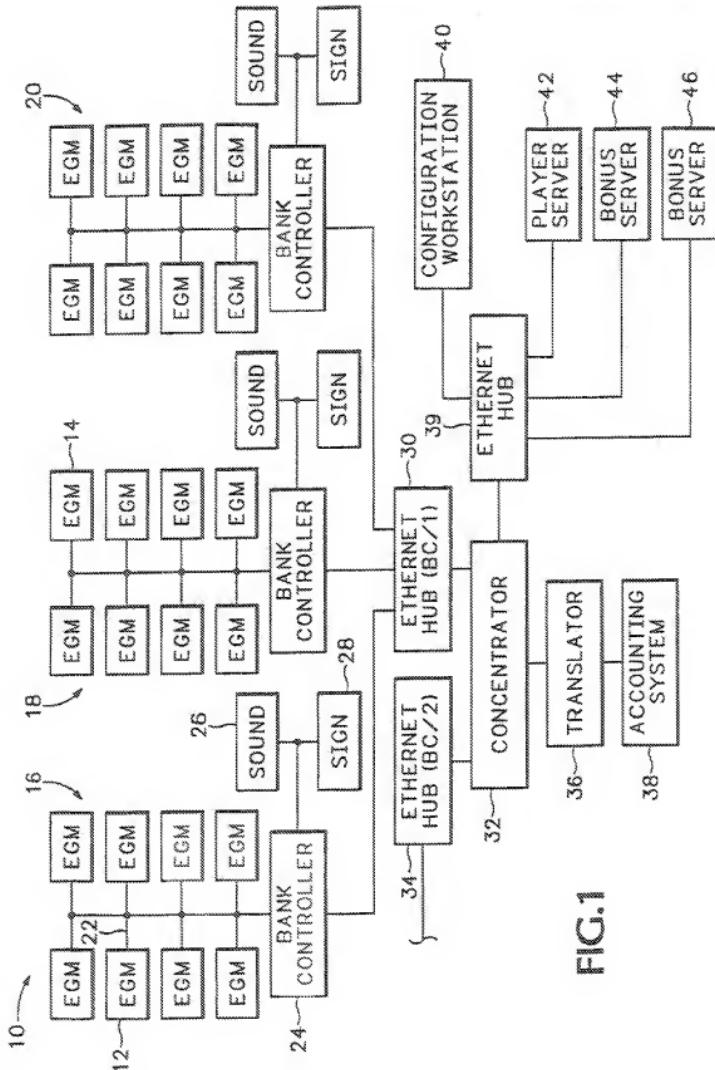
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ABSTRACT

A plurality of gaming machines, such as slot machines or the like, are networked together in communication with a bonus server. The bonus server identifies each machine on the network and transmits a bonus token across the network to a machine control interface within a selected one of the machines. The bonus token is preferably a message packet containing the unique address of the gaming machine selected as well as various parameters which govern aspects of a bonus session initiated at the machine. Receipt of the bonus token signal at the machine causes additional lighting and sound effects beyond that enabled by the normal operation of the game. The bonus token also enables additional bonuses within the game that are awarded to a player of the selected machine. At the end of a bonus period, the bonus token is returned to the bonus server, processed to introduce new parameters, and then transmitted to a second one of the plurality of gaming machines. The bonus token is passed in this way from machine to machine to enhance the gaming experience of the lucky player of the selected gaming machine.

18 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets





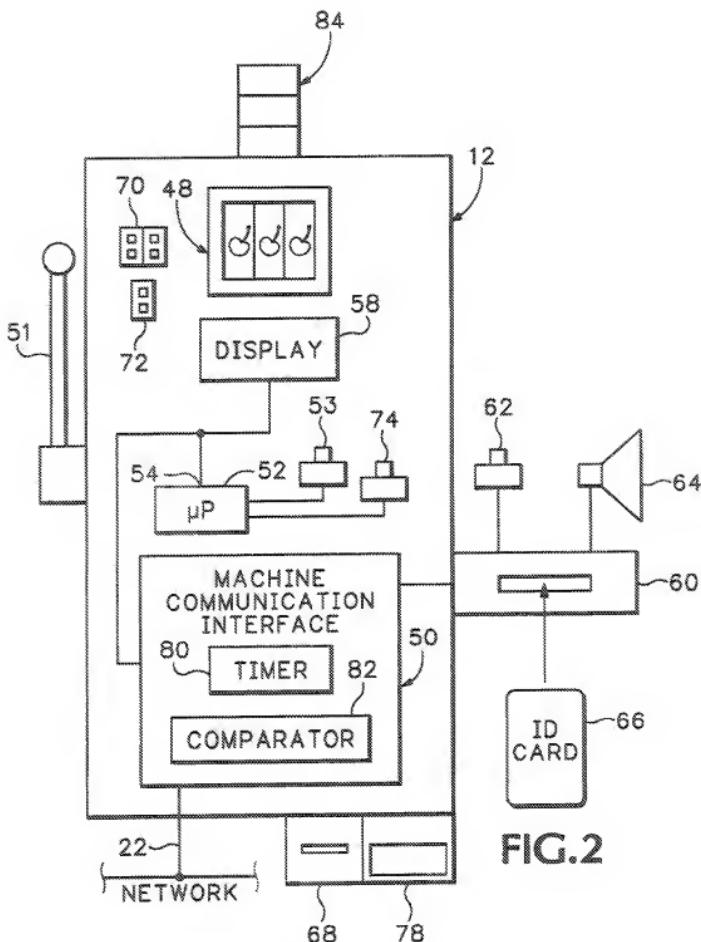


FIG.2

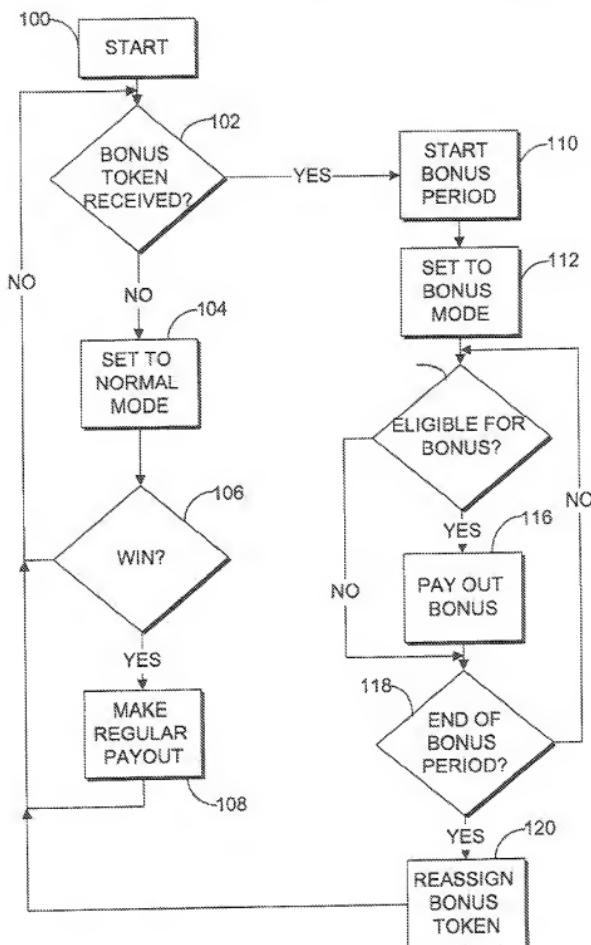


FIG. 3

**NETWORKED GAMING DEVICES THAT
END A BONUS AND CONCURRENTLY
INITIATE ANOTHER BONUS**

RELATED APPLICATION DATA

This patent application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/083,303, titled BONUS TOKEN, which was filed Apr. 28, 1998.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to electronic gaming machines interconnected by a computer network and more particularly to a method and apparatus for implementing a bonus across a gaming machine network.

Casinos typically include electronic gaming machines (EGMs) such as slot machines and video poker machines. Slot machines, for example, usually include three reels that each have a plurality of symbols printed thereon. After the player applies a wager to the machine, he or she starts play by triggering a switch that starts the reels spinning. Each reel stops at a random position and thereby presents three symbols—one from each reel. Under a normal mode of operation, some combinations of symbols do not pay any jackpot. Others pay varying amounts according to predetermined combinations that appear in a pay table displayed on the machine and stored in the gaming machine's programmable read-on memory (PROM).

More recently, multiple gaming machines have been linked together into groups of machines that share the same gaming features and bonus pool. A simple example of such a system is progressive video poker in which players can win a collective pool of money from any one of a plurality of gaming machines grouped together on the casino floor. More complex examples for bonuses are implemented using bonus servers over a network, such as disclosed in co-pending application Ser. No. 08/843,411, filed Apr. 15, 1997 and assigned to the Assignee of the present application (the '411 application), which is incorporated herein by reference for all purposes. Also incorporated herein by reference for all purposes is U.S. Pat. No. 5,655,961, assigned to the Assignee of the present application (the '961 patent), which also discloses bonuses that can be implemented by bonus servers over a network.

Gaming machine players often harbor a belief in streaks and tend to play only those games that they think are "hot" and ready to pay a big jackpot. This is even truer with linked machines. If a prospective player in a casino passes by a bank of gaming machines in which very little is happening, the player's impression might be that the machines in the bank are "cold" and the player will consequently refuse to stop and play them. If, however, the machines give the impression that they could win substantial bonus awards at any time, then the player would be more likely to sit and play.

Accordingly, in order to increase the excitement of playing gaming devices, it is desirable to provide a device in which a bonus event is continuous across a bank of machines but random with respect to any single gaming machine.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is, therefore, an object of the invention to provide a method for operating networked gaming devices wherein a continuous bonus event is randomly distributed across each of the gaming machines.

The invention comprises a method for awarding bonuses over a gaming network having a plurality of gaming

machines interconnected by a network. Play is allowed to occur on a plurality of gaming machines. A bonus token signal is then sent to a first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines. A bonus period is initiated at only that first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines responsive to the bonus token signal. The first selected gaming machine operates in a bonus mode until the bonus period expires. The bonus token signal is then passed to a second selected one of the plurality of gaming machines. Concurrent with the transition of the bonus token signal from the first machine to the second machine, the bonus period is ended at the first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines and is started at the second selected one of the plurality of gaming machines. The bonus token is passed in this way from machine to machine to enhance the gaming experience of the lucky player of the selected gaming machine.

The system for implementing the method includes a plurality of gaming machines, each of said machines having a normal operation mode and a bonus mode. A bonus server is linked to the plurality of gaming machines over a network. The bonus server includes selection means for identifying at least a selected one of the plurality of gaming machines and signal generation means for generating a bonus token signal. Signal transmission means are included for sending the bonus token signal to at least the selected one of the plurality of gaming machines responsive to the selection means. In operation, the selected one of the plurality of gaming machines switches from the normal operation mode to the bonus mode responsive to receipt of the bonus token signal.

The above system increases the excitement of playing gaming devices because, at any one time, there is always a winning machine. Accordingly, the player is more likely to continue playing the gaming machines because he or she is substantially assured of a bonus if he or she plays long enough. Additionally, since any one of the machines is most likely to be in bonus mode at any one time, the casino proprietor will honestly be able to say that, "the winning never stops".

The foregoing and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will become more readily apparent from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention that proceeds with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram showing a plurality of electronic gaming machines interconnected by a computer network to a host computer in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a slot machine and associated hardware implemented in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a flow diagram illustrating the operation of the gaming machine of FIG. 2 during the distribution of the bonus token across the network of FIG. 1 in accordance with a feature of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Turning now to FIG. 1, indicated generally at 10 is a schematic diagram illustrating a plurality of electronic gaming machines (EGMs), like EGMs 12, 14, interconnected by a computer network. Included therein are three banks, indicated generally at 16, 18, 20, of EGMs. Each EGM is connected via a network connection, like connection 22, to a bank controller 24.

In the present embodiment of the invention, each bank controller comprises a processor that facilitates data communication between the EGMS in its associated bank and the other components on the network. The bank controller also includes a CD ROM drive for transmitting digitized sound effects, such as music and the like, to a speaker 26 responsive to commands issued over the network to bank controller 24. The bank controller is also connected to an electronic sign 28 that displays information, such as jackpot amounts and the like, visible to players of machines on bank 16. Such displays are generated and changed responsive to commands issued over the network to bank controller 24. Each of the other banks, 18, 20 of EGMS include associated bank controllers, speakers, and signs as shown, which operate in substantially the same manner.

Ethernet hub 30 connects each of the bank controllers associated with banks 16, 18, 20 of EGMS to a concentrator 32. Another Ethernet hub 34 connects similar bank controllers (not shown), each associated with an additional bank of EGMS (also not shown), to concentrator 32. The concentrator functions as a data control switch to route data from each of the banks to a translator 36. The translator comprises a compatibility buffer between the concentrator and a proprietary accounting system 38. It functions to place all the data gathered from each of the bank controllers into a format compatible with accounting system 38. Accounting system 38 keeps track of individual player accounts in cooperation with card reader 60 (FIG. 2) located at each of the gaming machines. In the present embodiment of the invention, translator 36 comprises an Intel Pentium 233 MHz Processor operating Microsoft Windows NT 4.0.

Another Ethernet hub 39 is connected to a configuration workstation 40, a player server 42, and to bonus servers 44, 46. Hub 39 facilitates data flow to or from workstation 40 and servers 44, 46, 48.

The configuration workstation 40 comprises a personal computer including a keyboard, Intel Pentium Processor, and Ethernet card. It is the primary user interface with the network.

The player server 42 comprises a microcomputer that is used to control messages that appear on displays associated with each EGM. Player server 42 includes an Intel Pentium Processor and an Ethernet card.

Bonus servers 44, 46 each comprise a microcomputer used to control bonus applications on the network. Each bonus application comprises a set of rules for awarding jackpots in excess of those established by the pay tables on each EGM. For example, some bonus awards may be made randomly, while others may be made to linked groups of EGMS operating in a progressive jackpot mode. Examples of bonuses that can be implemented on the network are disclosed in co-pending application no. 08/843,411, filed Apr. 15, 1997 and assigned to the Assignee of the present application (the '411 application), which is incorporated herein by reference for all purposes. This co-pending application also describes in more detail features of the network, like that shown in FIG. 1, that may be used to implement the present invention. The '961 patent also discloses bonuses that can be implemented by bonus servers 44, 46 and a network that could be used to implement the present invention.

As used herein, the term bonus amount indicates any one award made to a player on a gaming machine resulting from a jackpot won according to the pay table on one of the EGMS and any additional amount indicated by a supplemental bonusing system. The '411 application and '882 patent

include many examples of bonusing systems that can be implemented to supplement the original pay table jackpot award.

Casinos typically include electronic gaming machines (EGMs) such as slot machines and video poker machines. Slot machines, for example, usually include three reels that each have a plurality of symbols printed thereon. After the player applies a wager to the machine, he or she starts play by triggering a switch that starts the reels spinning. Each reel stops at a random position and thereby presents three symbols—one from each reel. When the slot machines are operating under a normal mode, some combinations of symbols do not pay any jackpot. Others pay varying amounts according to predetermined combinations that appear in a pay table displayed on the machine and stored in the gaming machine's programmable read-on memory (PROM). In the present invention, the gaming machines on the network are also programmed to include a bonus mode in which additional features are enabled responsive to communications from the bonus servers as described in more detail described further below.

FIG. 2 is a highly schematic representation of an electronic slot machine—typical of each of the machines in the network—that incorporates network communications hardware as described hereinafter. This hardware is described in the '961 patent, and is referred to therein as a data communications node. Preferably the network communications hardware is like that disclosed in the '411 application, namely a machine communication interface (MCI) 50. MCI 50 facilitates communication between the network, via connection 22, and microprocessor 52, which controls the operation of EGM 12. This communication occurs via a serial port 54 on the microprocessor to which MCI 50 is connected. In a preferred embodiment, MCI 50 includes a timer 58 and a comparator 62 whose purpose will be explained more fully below.

Included in EGM 12 are three reels, indicated generally at 48. Each reel includes a plurality of different symbols thereon. The reels spin in response to a pull on handle 51 or activation of a spin button 53 after a wager is made.

MCI 50 includes a random access memory (RAM), which can be used as later described herein. The MCI also facilitates communication between the network and a vacuum fluorescent display (VFD) 58, a card reader 60, a player-activated push button 62, and a speaker 64.

Machine 12 further includes a indicator light, such as hat light 84 located atop the machine, for indicating to players which of the machines has received a bonus token and is currently operating in bonus mode as later described herein. In a preferred embodiment, hat light 84 is comprised of three independent light portions—top, middle and bottom—each of which indicate whether the machine is currently in a bonus mode of a particular type.

Before describing play according to the invention, description will first be made of typical play on a slot machine, like EGM 12. A player plays EGM 12 by placing a wager and then pulling handle 51 or depressing spin button 53. The wager may be placed by inserting a bill into a bill acceptor 68. A typical slot machine, like EGM 12, includes a coin acceptor (not shown) that may also be used by the player to make a wager. A credit meter 70 is a numeric display that indicates the total number of credits available for the player to wager. The credits are in the base denomination of the machine. For example, in a nickel slot machine, when a five-dollar bill is inserted into bill acceptor 68, a credit of 100 appears on credit meter 70. To place a wager,

the player depresses a coin-in button (not shown), which transfers a credit from the credit meter 70 to a coin-in meter 72. Each time the button is depressed, a single credit transfers to the coin-in meter up to a maximum bet that can be placed on a single play of the machine. In addition, a maximum-bet button (also not shown) may be provided to immediately transfer the maximum number of credits that can be wagered on a single play from the credit meter 70 to the coin-in meter 72.

When coin-in meter 72 reflects the number of credits that the player intends to wager, the player depresses spin button 53 thereby initiating a game.

The player may choose to have any jackpot won applied to credit meter 70. When the player wishes to cash out, the player depresses a cash-out button 74, which causes the credits on meter 70 to be paid in coins to the player at a hopper 78, which is part of machine 12. The machine consequently pays to the player, via hopper 78, the number of coins—in the base denomination of the machine—that appear on credit meter 70.

Card reader 60 reads a player-tracking card 66 that is issued by the casino to individual players who choose to have such a card. Card reader 60 and player-tracking card 66 are known in the art, as are player-tracking systems, examples being disclosed in the '882 patent and '411 application. Briefly summarizing such a system, a player registers with the casino prior to commencing gaming. The casino issues a unique player-tracking card to the player and opens a corresponding player account or record that is stored in a database of other player accounts stored on accounting system 38 (FIG. 1). Prior to playing one of the EGMs in FIG. 1, the player inserts card 66 into reader 60 thus permitting accounting system 38 to track player activity, such as amounts wagered and won and rate of play.

To激励 the player to use the card, the casino awards to each player points proportional to the money wagered by the player. Players consequently accrue points at a rate related to the amount wagered. The points are displayed on display 58. In prior art player tracking systems, the player may take his or her card to a special desk in the casino where a casino employee scans the card to determine how many accrued points are in the player's account. The player may then redeem points for selected merchandise, meals in casino restaurants, or the like, which each have assigned point values.

According to a preferred method for operating the gaming machines over a network, a single selected machine (or selected subset) out of a group of machines would be in a bonus mode at any given time. This is enabled by passing what is referred to herein as a "bonus token" between gaming machines. As will be more fully explained below, the bonus token resides in any one of the plurality of eligible gaming machines for a bonus period during which the selected gaming machine operates in an enhanced or bonus mode. At the expiration of that bonus period, the bonus token is passed back to the bonus server where it is reconfigured as required and transferred to a second selected gaming machine to start the cycle anew.

FIG. 3 illustrates the preferred method for implementing the invention over a gaming network. Play is allowed to occur on the plurality of gaming machines in step 180, such as on machine 12. A bonus server, such as server 44 (FIG. 1) generates a bonus token consisting of a message packet that includes a unique address (such as an IP address) which specifies a target machine. The unique address is generated by selection means within the server which operates accord-

ing to methods described with respect to step 120 explained below. For instance, the gaming machine ID number can be determined based on any one of the following: simple random, random with no back-to-back, random without replacement, deterministic, or weighted random. Other methods for determining the gaming machine ID number can be envisioned and are not intended to be limited to the methods listed above.

The token would also include various parameters relating to the bonus session. These might include, but are not limited to, the session length (step 118), a pay multiplier value or other type of bonus available (step 116), special player messaging instructions to be displayed on display 58 (FIG. 2), etc. Each of these parameters are generated by program means operating according to bonus game rules, examples of which are disclosed below.

Once play begins, the MCI 50 on each gaming machine is queried to determine whether a bonus token has been received (step 102). In one method of operation, there can be point-to-point communication between the bonus server and the selected machine. Preferably, however, the bonus token is broadcast to all gaming machines on the network. The comparator 82 of each machine's MCI 50 then compares the gaming machine ID number embedded within the gaming machine to that listed in the bonus token message packet.

If the ID number of the bonus token does not match the ID number of the gaming machine, then the MCI 50 sets or maintains the gaming machine in normal mode (step 104) in which play is processed normally according to default rules established for the particular gaming machine. Under a normal mode of operation, for instance, some combinations of symbols from reels 48 (FIG. 2) do not pay any jackpot. Others pay varying amounts according to predetermined combinations that appear in a pay table displayed on the machine and stored in the gaming machine's programmable read-on memory (PROM). During normal play, a win (step 106) is determined by comparing the reel combination resulting from play with the pay table. Payouts are then made normally (step 108) according to the amounts specified in the pay table. The process then returns back to the step of querying the MCI 50 to determine whether the bonus token with the applicable gaming machine ID number has been received.

If the ID number of the bonus token matches the ID number of the gaming machine, then the MCI 50 activates countdown timer 80 according to the bonus period length specified in the bonus token message packet (step 110) and places the machine in a bonus mode (112) which activates visual and audio cues. One example of this is to activate hat light 84 to indicate that the machine is in bonus mode. The gaming machine selected in this fashion is called the selected machine.

A second level query (step 114) is made to determine whether a player on a selected machine would be eligible for bonuses payable during the bonus session. Examples of eligibility criteria, such as payment of a MAX bet, are listed below. If the player is deemed eligible, then the MCI authorizes payment (step 116) of the bonus according to the bonus mode rules stored in gaming machine memory.

In bonus mode, the MCI of the selected gaming machine enables additional gaming features of the selected gaming machine. These additional features include bonus payouts above and beyond those jackpot awards which would occur during play in normal mode. Examples of such bonuses, such as payout multipliers, are specified below.

Once the bonus has been paid to eligible players, play proceeds to a determination of whether the bonus session

has expired (step 118). During operation in bonus mode, a timer 80 (FIG. 2) is started upon receipt of the bonus token at the gaming machine having the correct ID number. The length of time at which the timer is set (e.g. 10 seconds) is either programmed in memory within the gaming machine or transferred as data from the bonus server to the gaming machine within the bonus token. The timer then counts down to time t=0 at which time the bonus period expires and the bonus token is transmitted back to the bonus server where it is reassigned in step 120 to a second selected gaming machine.

Further details about the methods for carrying out a preferred embodiment of the invention are detailed below: See Bonus Mode (step 112).

Ideally, the bonus period would be accompanied by animations, flashing lights, sounds, etc. on the bonus machine to attract attention to the bonus event. This would be particularly appealing if relatively small groups of machines were participating in the promotion. Imagine a carousel of 10 to 20 games, such as a bank of machines 16 (FIG. 1), with the bonus feature lasting 5 seconds on each machine. One could watch the feature jump from game to game. With the right visual and sound cues, this would make for a much more enjoyable experience. From a marketing point of view, the concept also has some advantages, in that, one could advertise that, "there is always one machine that is a winner, if you play long enough it will happen on your machine" or "the winning never stops", etc.

Eligible for Bonus? (step 114)

Besides no play on the game, there could be any number of criteria used to determine if a game is eligible for the bonus. Examples are listed below:

1. Gaming machine ID matches ID listed within bonus token.

2. Player tracking card 66 (FIG. 2) must be inserted in gaming machine 12.

3. Maximum coin bet must be played.

4. Specified play rate in coins/minute.

5. A particular reel sequence is obtained.

6. The "rating" of the player currently at the machine (e.g. whether he or she is a valued patron of the casino). If the selected gaming machine is deemed eligible, then play proceeds to the next step in which the bonus is paid to the player (step 116). If the gaming machine is not eligible, then step 115 is skipped and a determination is made whether the bonus period has expired (step 118). In either case, however, pay table jackpot would be paid out normally given the proper reel sequence.

Pay Out Bonus (step 116)

Once eligibility of the machine is determined, bonuses can be paid out. The basic premise is that a single machine (or subset) out of group of machines would be selected for a bonus. The bonus could take many different forms, such as:

1. Pay table wins for one or more spins are multiplied by a bonus multiplier.

2. Large bonus prize awarded if any one or more spins within the bonus period yields a specified combination.

3. Player tracking points for one or more spins are accumulated at some multiplied rate (e.g. 10x or some other multiplier).

4. A randomly determined prize is instantly awarded.

5. A free-for-all session in which a player's bet is refunded on any losing spin.

6. A free game session in which a number of free spins or non-redemable credits that must be wagered on the gaming machine are awarded.

7. Pay table changed to a bonus pay table with more frequent and/or higher pays. This can also include special pays for "almost" winners, e.g. "BAR-BAR-Blank" on a slot machine or a video poker hand that is one card away from a royal flush.

End of Bonus Period? (Step 118)

In the preferred embodiment of the invention, duration of the bonus session at the selected machine is regulated by setting a bonus spin time using timer 80 (FIG. 2). When timer 80 reaches t=0, then the bonus session is ended and the bonus token is returned to the bonus server across the network where it is processed and reassigned as discussed below with reference to step 120.

The purpose of the bonus token is to ensure that only one (or some other specified subset) of games are in a bonus mode at any one time. If the timer method is used, it is possible that a game could get "stuck" in a bonus session. The bonus server would then generate another token and send it to a machine. This would result in too many bonus tokens moving around the system and interfere with the carefully calculated payout percentage that the casino sets for the gaming machines.

In an alternate embodiment of the invention, the bonus server would wait for the acknowledgement from the game 23 that the bonus session was concluded prior to creating a new bonus token. However, as a practical matter there probably would be some sort of "safety" timer at the bonus server which would be started each time a token is sent. This safety time would be set to, for example, two or three times the expected bonus duration. If the token is not returned from the selected machine to the server in that amount of time, then the bonus server would create a new token. This would prevent the malfunction of a single game from freezing the process.

35. The timer 80 within the gaming machine can be set by any number of different methods, such as:

1. A fixed amount of time.

2. A fixed amount of time randomly determined within a range of possible times stored within the bonus server.

40. 3. Time is increased or decreased based upon spin outcomes at the selected gaming machine so that, for instance, the more you win, the longer the bonus period.

45. 4. The bonus session stays in effect until the first game win.

50. 5. Time is determined based upon the "caliber" of the player as identified by the player tracking card. For example, VIP players which have proven their worth to the casino could get longer bonus periods.

In an alternate method, the length of the bonus period is determined based upon the number of spins and not the time. In this later case, timer 80 would be replaced or supplemented with a spin counter (not shown) adapted to count 55 down from a pre-established or dynamically determined number of bonus period spins. It is understood that the invention is not limited to reel-based games such as slot machines. Accordingly, "bonus spin time" and "bonus period" spins are intended to be applied broadly to reel-based games such as slots as well as non-reel based games such as video poker.

In yet another embodiment, the bonus session can be outcome dependent meaning that the bonus session ends or continues based upon play at the base game. In a first example, the bonus period ends when the player has won a specified number of credits during the bonus session. Other criteria for ending the bonus session can be if the player has

won a specified number of rounds during the bonus session or alternately a specified number of losing rounds or consecutive losing rounds. Finally, the bonus period can be ended if the base game yields some predetermined outcome, such as a particular combination of symbols on a reel-based slot game.

Reassign Bonus Token (Step 120)

Once the bonus period expires, the bonus token is passed back to the bonus server and then reassigned to a second selected machine. Several methods could be used to determine the next game to receive the bonus token. For example:

1. Simple Random—The next selected gaming machine could be selected at random from a list of all eligible gaming machines on the network, including the currently selected gaming machine. Every gaming machine in the list would have an equal probability of being selected. This probability would be $1/N$, where N is the total number of gaming machines on the link.
2. Random, no back-to-back—The next selected gaming machine could be selected at random from a list of all gaming machines on the link, except the previously (first randomly) selected gaming machine. The gaming machine so selected is referred to herein as the random second gaming machine. This would prevent "back-to-back bonuses" on the same machine. Every gaming machine eligible for selection would have an equal probability of being selected. The probability would be $1/(N-1)$.
3. Random without replacement—The next selected gaming machine would be selected from a list of gaming machines on the link. Once selected, the gaming machine would be removed from the list. The list would eventually decrement to zero once all eligible games on the link were selected. At that time all games would be added back to the list and the process would start over. Over the long term, the probability of being selected would be $1/N$. Over a single "cycle", the probability of being selected would vary. Using this approach, it would be possible to guarantee that every machine would experience the bonus over the course of a certain time period.
4. Deterministic—The next selected gaming machine would be selected sequentially from a list of all gaming machines in which the sequence order is predetermined.

5. Weighted Random—The next selected gaming machine would be selected at random from a list of eligible gaming machines, however, machines would not have equal probability of being selected from the list. One possible embodiment of this method would be to assign a weighted number to each of the plurality of gaming machines on the link and selecting the machine ID within the bonus token based upon a weighted probability using the weighted number. This method can be used to equalize the payback percentage (bonus+base game) for different types of games on the network. This method would therefore allow games of widely differing base percentage amounts to be combined on a bonus token link. Games with high base payback, and therefore less available margin for bonuses, could still participate in the link. Such games would just enter the bonus mode less frequently than games with more available margin for bonuses.

An alternate application of the bonus token is to access a bonus pool from the gaming machines linked over the network. When a pool threshold is reached, the bonus token

is passed to eligible machines according to the present invention for as long as the bonus pool is not depleted. Additionally, activation of the bonus tokens could be time-based so that they are active under specified times of the day and/or days of the week.

EXAMPLE

To understand the basic premise and to consider the effects on hold percentage, consider the following simple example of a bonus token game:

Configuration

100 participating games
All 100 games being played (simple case)
Games are 92% payback

Bonus Type

When the bonus token is passed to a machine, a bonus multiplier

(MTJ) is activated for the next 2 spins. Any pay table win on these two spins is multiplied by 2.

The approximate effect on payback percentage is determined as follows. Neglecting token transfer time, and time associated with the token being passed to a machine with a game in progress, each game will have the bonus token for 2 spins out of approximately 200 spins. The probability of being in the bonus mode is: $2/200$ or 0.01 . The contribution to the overall machine payback is:

$$0.01 \times 2 \times 92\% = 1.8\%$$

30 The most important issue brought to light by the above example is what should happen if all games are not being played. If only 2 of the 100 machines are being played, then obviously the token cannot just pass back and forth continually between the two machines without severely affecting the payback percentage. If that happened, the bonus payback percentage in the above example would be:

$$0.02 \times 2 \times 92\% = 92\%$$

40 This would give a total game payback of 184% which would mean that the casino would lose money on the machines. This is undesirable from the casino's perspective. There are several possible ways to get around this:

1. An inactive game holds the token—The bonus server passes the token. If the selected gaming machine is inactive it holds the token for a specified time period then passes the token back to the bonus server. The inactive game might display the fact that it has the token, but no bonuses could be paid. Someone must be playing a machine prior to receiving the token in order to enable the bonus feature.
2. The bonus server holds the token—The bonus server first passes the token. If the game is inactive it immediately returns the token and informs the bonus server that the gaming machine is inactive. The bonus server then holds the token until some pre-specified criteria were met. It then selects the next game and forwards the token. In the simple example above, when an inactive game is found, the bonus server can hold the token until two games are played on any one machine on the link. This would ensure that the bonus payback percentage remains constant.

Multiple Bonus Tokens

It would be possible to have multiple bonus tokens being passed around the same link. Token collisions (two or more tokens sent to the same machine at the same time) would have to be considered. Tokens could be identical—e.g. cause

the same bonus feature to occur---or they could be unique (cause different types of bonuses to occur).

In one embodiment, token collisions could cause big bonuses to be paid. For example, if there were 3 unique tokens being passed around on a 100 game link, the probability of all three landing on a single machine at the same time would be 1/1,000,000. One could then afford to pay a bid bonus if this occurred.

Reception of each of the tokens at the gaming machines can be indicated via light 84 (FIG. 2). The hat light as shown in FIG. 2 includes three independently lighted sections which correspond to each of the three bonus tokens being passed around in the above embodiment.

Token Bingo

In another embodiment of the invention, bonus mode would be initiated only if either a certain number or type of bonus tokens are collected. Instead of immediately enabling a bonus mode on the machine, the occurrence of a bonus token could simply increment a bonus token counter in the player database. Tracking of bonus tokens received by a particular player would be maintained within accounting system 38 (FIG. 1) or other database coupled to the network. The player would insert his or her player tracking card 66 (FIG. 2) within the gaming machine when the token was passed to his machine. A signal would then be passed to the accounting system 38 indicating the token received and the player account that received it. A special bonus would be paid only after a player received a pre-specified number of bonus tokens. Or, in the case of multiple unique tokens, the player would have to "collect" all of the unique tokens in order to receive the prize---referred to herein as token bingo.

As an added twist, the award amount can be a function of how quickly the player is able to accumulate the requisite number of tokens. The less time used or games played to get all the tokens, the greater the player's award.

One could have unique tokens that were only available at certain times. For a player to win the bonus he or she would need to collect tokens from off-peak times as well as peak times. Alternately, certain tokens might only be available on certain machines. This has the advantage in that the casino could then encourage the player to try new games, or to play games of higher denomination or hold percentage.

Having described and illustrated the principles of the invention in a preferred embodiment thereof, it should be apparent that the invention can be modified in arrangement and detail without departing from such principles. We claim all modifications and variation coming within the spirit and scope of the following claims.

We claim:

1. A method for awarding bonuses over a gaming network having a plurality of gaming machines interconnected by a network, the method comprising the steps of:
 - allowing play to occur on a plurality of gaming machines;
 - sending a bonus token signal to a first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines;
 - initiating a bonus period at only that first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines responsive to the bonus token signal;
 - passing the bonus token signal to a second selected one of the plurality of gaming machines, and
 - ending the bonus period at the first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines and concurrently initiating a bonus period at the second selected one of the plurality of gaming machines.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of ending the bonus period includes:

predetermining a bonus award spin amount, counting a number of plays made on the first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines after the step of initiating the bonus period, and ending the bonus period after the bonus award spin number equals the number of plays counted in the counting step.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of ending the bonus period includes:

- predetermining a bonus award spin time;
- counting down from the bonus award spin time; and
- ending the bonus period when the bonus award spin time equals zero.

4. The method according to claim 1, further including the steps of:

- setting eligibility criteria;
- determining if the first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines is eligible according to the eligibility criteria, and
- awarding a bonus only if the first selected one is eligible.

5. The method according to claim 4, wherein one of the eligibility criteria is whether or not the machine is currently being played.

6. The method according to claim 4, wherein one of the plurality of eligibility criteria is whether the first selected one of the plurality of gaming machines presents a winning sequence.

7. The method according to claim 4, wherein one of the eligibility criteria is whether a maximum coin bet was made.

8. The method according to claim 4, wherein one of the eligibility criteria is whether a player tracking card is being used during play of the selected one of the plurality of gaming machines.

9. The method according to claim 4, wherein one of the eligibility criteria is whether a play rate of the first selected one machine is satisfied.

10. The method according to claim 1, further including the step of reassigning the bonus token to a random second one of the gaming machines after the bonus period expires.

11. The method according to claim 10 wherein the random second one of the gaming machines is not the first selected one machine.

12. The method according to claim 11 further including the step of reassigning the bonus token to each of the plurality of machines according to a sequence, wherein the sequence includes each of the plurality of the machines only once within the sequence.

13. The method according to claim 1 further including the step of reassigning the bonus token to each of the plurality of machines according to a sequence order, wherein the sequence order is predetermined.

14. The method according to claim 1 further including the steps of:

- assigning a weighted number to each of the plurality of gaming machines;
- assigning the bonus token to one of the plurality of gaming machines according to the weighted number.

15. The method according to claim 1 further including the steps of:

- sending a second bonus token to one of the plurality of gaming machines;
- initiating a second-type bonus feature at the one of the plurality of gaming machines responsive to the second bonus token if the bonus token signal and the second bonus token are received in the same machine at the same time.

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16. A method for operating a plurality of gaming machines interconnected over a network, each of said gaming machines operable under a normal mode and a bonus mode, the method comprising the steps of:
- identifying a first selected subset of the plurality of gaming machines;
 - operating said first selected subset under a first bonus mode;
 - identifying a second selected subset of the plurality of gaming machines; and
 - operating said second selected subset under a second bonus mode;
 - detecting a third subset of machines that are concurrently operating under a first bonus mode and second bonus mode; and
 - operating said third subset of machines under a third bonus mode.

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17. A method for awarding bonuses over a gaming network having a plurality of gaming machines interconnected by a network, the method comprising the steps of:
- allowing play to occur on a plurality of gaming machines;
 - initiating a bonus period on a first selected subset of the gaming machines;
 - ending the bonus period for the first selected subset of the gaming machines; and
 - initiating a bonus period on a second selected subset of the gaming machines concurrently with the step of ending the bonus period for the first selected subset of the gaming machines.
18. The method of claim 17, further including the step of determining a second selected subset that is different from the first selected subset.

* * * * *

(x) Related Proceedings Appendix

None.